(TRIBAL STUDIES OF INDIA SERIES T 134)

ETHNIC IDENTITY ETHNICITY AND SOCIAL STRATIFICATION IN NORTH-EAST INDIA

N.K. DAS

SHOUT
SHARE
IT

A vibrant feature of North-East region has been the rise of ethnic consciousness and aspirations leading to tribal movements and ethnic unrest. This phenomenon of ethnicity has assumed enormous significance and attracted the attention of social scientists and political strategists alike.

Dr. N.K. Das had the privilege of conducting systematic social anthropological research in Nagaland and other regions of North-East during 1976-88. Based on the material thus collected, Dr. Das has critically examined the ethno-historical and socio-political processes and factors causing ethnic conflict in sensitive North-East India. Using anthropological insight and historical perspective Dr. Das provides critical analysis of pre-state segmentary social system among the Zounuo-Keyhonuo Naga, and examines the processes of state formation among the Ahom, Kachari, Meitei, Jaintia, Koch, Karbi and Khasi tribes in time and space dimensions. Other crucial subject matters discussed in this pioneering work are 'concept of tribe', 'fallacy of unilineal descent theory', 'matriliny to patriliny', 'peasantization', 'Inequality', 'slavery', 'social-stratification', 'sanskritization', 'Christianity', 'Naga', 'Mizo', '(Udayachal) Assam', 'GNLF', 'TNV', 'Karbi', 'Bodo' movements, and cultural revivalism.

A valuable book for scholars and researchers of the disciplines of anthropology, sociology, history, political science, planners and administrators involved in tribal affairs and general readership alike.

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ETHNIC IDENTITY, ETHNICITY AND SOCIAL STRATIFICATION IN NORTH-EAST INDIA

N.K. DAS

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TO MY

FATHER AND MOTHER

FOREWORD

THE study of nascent socio-political formations in the North-East is a subject of enormous significance to social scientists and political strategists alike. It has been a frontier region of India's history and culture where scholars like K.L. Barua, S.K. Bhuiyan and J.H. Hutton have tried to identify the structures and processes that are relevant to the understanding of social situations elsewhere in the country. Over the years scholars have been able to reconstruct the outlines of political history and ideological super-structure of the social processes that have been at work. In recent years the process of state formation in North-East India has been critically analysed. Like similar processes elsewhere in the country, state formation was a multi-pronged process here. It involved experiments with a new organisation and technology of production, a new set of social relations. It resulted in the rise of multi-community or multi-ethnic formations in the Brahmaputra valley and beyond. Even those communities which were not brought within state system had a well-integrated, cohesive pre-state system of authority based on a sharing of power. The pre-state system did not exist in a vacuum and did not necessarily imply a situation of chaos. The author's study of the segmentary social system among the Zounuo-Keyhonuo (Southern Angami Naga) throws interesting light on how such a pre-state system worked,

until it was peripherally integrated with the colonial system and the post-colonial state.

A feature of the North-East situation has been the rise of ethnic identities in recent years, more sharply and vividly than ever before. Old tribal communities have assumed new names and sought not only a cross-regional, but also a trans-national identity. A number of small ethnic groups have merged with bigger ethnic groups and in some cases bigger tribes have broken up into several groups. Many factors such as the development process the democratic system of administration and politics, rise of Christianity, influx of outsiders have added to identity consciousness. Ethnicity has been an underlying principle in formation of states in the North-East since 1960s. The political situation therefore is vibrant, which occasionally causes misgivings elsewhere, but Indian democratic system has proved itself resilient enough to absorb and accommodate ethnic aspirations of diverse groups in its frontier regions.

Poverty, inequality and stratification have emerged as yet another area of study in the North-East. On the one hand, the North-East states are on top in terms of per capita investment by the Centre. So much flow of money has created problems in tribal societies. Polarization is in evidence in societies, which were once considered egalitarian. Exploitation of tribals by tribals has emerged as a crucial issue, and yet intra-tribe contradictions are overshadowed by the tribe non-tribe confrontation. Moreover, nothing is more assuring than the emergence of a professional, confident middle class consisting of members of a tribal community who are looking at their problems in twin terms of modernity and tradition.

I am happy to commend this work by one of our competent officers. We require today a conceptual framework for the study of the North-East that partakes of both historical perspective and anthropological insight. I am glad to note the

application of combined methodology in the exploration of the North-East situation in this book, which I hope will be widely read.

New Delhi:
25th March, 1988.

K.S. SINGH
Director General
Anthropological Survey of India

PREFACE

THE pre-dominant tribal character of the societies in North-East India has been traditionally linked with distinguishable ethno-historical and techno-environmental pressures and processes. Relative isolation, difficult terrain, and exclusiveness had generally influenced the perpetuation of Mongoloid ethnic elements and tribal systems which are based on structural principles such as kinship and descent. The Brahmaputra valley had however experienced the synthesis of Mongoloid and Sanskritic cultures from an early period. Literary sources point to the prevalence of the solar cult and *tantrik* traditions in Pragjyotisa-Kamarupa (the ancient Assam). The widely celebrated festival of the Brahmaputra valley - *Bihu* - is said to be associated with fire worship and fertility rites. The local scholars traced the origin of river and place names such as Kamarupa-Pragajyotisa, Brahmaputra/Lauhitya and deity name *Kamakhya* in tribal idioms.

Gradual emigration of peasants, artisans and other caste-groups had considerably affected the technological and other aspects of production, but in the absence of spread of *jati/varna* model, the Brahmaputra valley did not witness the articulation and spread of the organic inter-group *jajamani* relations. At the same time, *sanskritization*, as a structural-functional and cultural mobilization process had little impact because Brahmanical

and Hinduization traditions and processes remained confined to royal lineages/families. A borrowed Indo-Sanskritic language could be established, however, as a major link language in Brahmaputra valley. This was partly to rationalize the state formation. This language imbibed local tribal phrases, folklore and myths and thus provided scope for a synthetic Assamese culture to grow. The predominant Mongoloid-Kirata ethnic elements thus continued to exist and perpetuate, unaffected by any strong force of socio-cultural transformation either in pre-colonial or colonial period and afterwards. The penetration of Hinduism, and particularly the caste system, was partly checked under the influence of Shankar Deo, the Assamese social reformer, who had generally spoken against the caste system and its component institutions.

In this book we have generally followed the theoretical approaches, procedures and methods of political anthropology and ethno-history. One of the major concerns of this work is to show how different kinds of ethno-historical and techno-environmental processes generate varied social formations with lesser or greater political integration and complexity. The chapters that follow are organized around specific themes and subject-matters. We start with the analysis of regional ethnic history in Chapter 2 whereby we have tried to describe in brief the ethnic, cultural and political history of the region. We have also touched upon the issue of sanskritization, - *vis-a-vis* tribalization in pre-colonial and colonial periods. In Chapter 3 we deal with tribal social structures in the context of unilineal and cognatic kinship/descent principles. Our emphasis in this chapter is mainly to reveal the politico-jural dimensions of descent system among a few matrilineal and patrilineal tribes. In Chapter 3, as also in next two chapters, the relation of authority and power to social structures are crictically examined and thereby the types of : social-stratification are demonstrated.

This exercise could not ignore the processes and problems of tribal political systems and state formation which we have described and discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

Three dominant types of tribal polity discernable in North-East India are 'tribe', 'chiefdom' and 'state'. We have described, examined, re-interpretated, and re-constructed several cases showing crucial linkages between political formations and economic and socio-cultural developments and transformation. It is found that drawing the dividing line between the state and the chiefdom in North East India is not an easy task because of the similarity of certain structural elements in both the systems. We also discover an undercurrent oscillatory tendency amongst the political systems, who tend to move towards an opposite direction, that is, from an acephalous/segmentary non-state structural level towards chieftainship/early-state/state formation and *vice versa*. Amongst several structural elements which emerge between or during such transformations are fission of one ethnic group into two or more groups, fusion of small ethnic groups, reconstruction of folklore and myths, institutional arrangements to gain prestige and to become 'bigmen' within and beyond kinship and descent frameworks, 'military' role of such elders (in pre-colonial phase) etc., which we have examined in ethno-historical contexts.

It has been possible to establish the 'tribe' as an analytic category, a real group of people united by basic structural principles and demonstrable through tribal/ethnic boundaries. I have generally described a tribe in North-East India in terms of segmentary/non-state socio-political structure. My emphasis on segmentary processes is guided by the fact that in tribal societies the political order does not exclude the order of kinship. The tribesmen of North-East have always maintained their ethnic boundaries and ethnic identities through kinship, cosmology and territory which could not

be altered to any great extent by exogenous factors during colonical or post-colonial periods. However, the colonial period had considerably influenced the economic domain which came to be influenced by exogenous factors swiftly. As a result of this factor and on account of several modernization processes, such as education, Christianity, participation in democratic institutions and processes in post-colonial period, the social stratification within tribal societies and class formation at inter-tribal level got intensified. The economic dimensions of social stratification are described and analysed in Chapter 5 of this book. Chapters 6 and 7 are devoted to more contemporary ethno-political situations. The ethnic boundaries and identities which were maintained through traditional means in pre-colonial period were further shaped and re-enforced in colonial period. In the wake of Independence of India the hills-tribesmen of North East in particular had become apprehensive of loosing their economic resources (land, forest) and privileges, which, they thought, they had enjoyed under protective measures adopted by the British. The fear of interference and exploitation by the plainsmen/outsiders was linked with loosing distinctive ethnic identities, the consciousness of which was politically encouraged by the British. The question of ethnic-identity thus remained crucial factor in post-colonial era because all tribal and social movements came to be centred around the question of preservation of cultural/ethnic identities. Redefinition of ethnic boundaries at expanded territorial levels came to be emphasized more and more in the context of political mobilization observable in post-Independence era within and outside the framework of the democratic institutions and constitutional framework. Yet another dimension of ethnicity has been the renewal and re-enforcement of socio-linguistic and cultural 'revivalistic' movements, generally associated with the demands of politico-administrative auto-

nomy, such as the demand of "homeland" by the Bodo, Zeliangrong, Karbi-Kachari and others in their respective territories.

This work is largely based on research experiences and information collected by me during 1976-86. I am thankful to the Director General, Anthropological Survey of India, for allowing me to conduct anthropological research in North-East India. I have depended on the published material of self and works of several scholars in preparation of this volume. I therefore acknowledge my thankfulness to those scholars. I am extremely grateful to Dr. K.S. Singh for having agreed to write the Foreword to this volume. I am thankful to Shri M.C. Mittal of Inter-India Publications, New Delhi, for accepting this volume for publication. My wife, Snehalata, had helped me in several ways during the preparation of this work. Several colleagues from within and outside the Survey had helped me in several ways, and Shri P.K. Guha and Shri P.S. Khisti had helped me in preparing the figures. I am thankful to all of them. The views expressed in this book are those of the author. I respectfully dedicate this book to my parents, Shri Chiranjiw Dash and Shrimati Indumati Dash.

Shillong: N.K. DAS

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ONE

INTRODUCTION

THE anthropologists are generally concerned with the varying ways in which men have organized their culture, and the structural pattern of inter-relationships which differentiate one society from another Anthropology has experienced two major developments during past several decades. The first was a fieldwork revolution which helped it to do away with simplistic evolutionism of the later nineteenth century. Out of this development came the wholistic approach, social structural studies, acculturation studies and the selection of a specific 'unit' the tribe or ethnic group. These groups had some meaningful integrity as wholes and thus the interrelationships of their parts and the comparisons of these relationships across a number of such ethnic units were methodologically appropriate, and enriching to the general social science community. The second major development in anthropology began with the end of World War II. During past decades the tribal societies have come more and more to play a role in modern nation states. The ethnic group has lost much of its wholeness because one of its most significant features is its belonging to a larger nation state. There are now several new emergent community activities, neighbourhood and ward organisations, attitudes to modern vs. traditional ways of doing things, all of these are vital features of contemporary social life in the new nations. Ethnicity

thus emerges as one significant variable in the new research situation.

It is only rarely that the anthropologists have come to appreciate and study the socio-cultural milieu of political life. Their traditional field of interests could not be expanded mainly because this discipline was not equipped with a suitable body of theory and techniques directed at the new variables. In the realm of theory anthropologists have traditionally had an over-simplified view of what the political system is and what kinds of categories of behaviour must be observed in order to report fully on the political life of the people. Through the study of contemporary theorists, however, much more adequate conceptionalization of politics is being diffused into anthropology (Easton, 1959, Almond and Powel, 1966).

One of the distinguishing features of anthropology, however, remains to be its wholistic approach to the study of human beings. Anthropologists not only study all varieties of people, they also study many aspects of human experience. It is, therefore, that in most monographs that the anthropologists write we find a discussion of the history of the area in which the people live, the physical environment, the organization of their family life, features of their l nguage, the peoples' settlement pattern, political and economic systems, religion, art and craft, and so on. Today the field of anthropology has become so broad and so much knowledge has been gathered that anthropologists tend to specialize in one topic or one area. Despite this specialization, however, the discipline of anthropology retains its wholistic orientation.

Trends of Anthropological Research in North-East India

North-East India has a long tradition of anthropological research. Right from second quarter of the past century the British administrators,

explorers, soldiers and tea-planters took great interest in the culture of local people and prepared valuable notes based on their impressions. Although the old reports are frequently tainted by personal bias of early authors (Elwin, 1959), one must bear in mind that the age of formal social anthropology had not yet begun in Britain, Europe or America when these men made their sojourns in the rugged hills of the North-East (Bhagabati, 1974). The roots of anthropological research in this region may thus be traced back to more than one hundred years ago from today. In the present century also social anthropological research had an early start in this region as compared with many regions elsewhere in India. This could be related with the production of sixteen detailed monographs under the auspices of an honorary director of ethnography of the Government of Assam. Hodson's work on *Meiteis* was published in 1908; Plafair published his book on the *Garos* in 1909; a book on *Lushai-Kuki clans* by Shakespeare was published in 1912; Gurdon's book on the *Khasi* was published in 1914. Maintaining the same tradition anthropologically trained administrators, such as J.H. Hutton and J.P. Mills wrote very interesting monographs on various Naga tribes, such as Angami, Ao, Sema, Lotha and Rengma. Some of these monographs have since been reprinted by the present Nagaland Government. Mention may be made here of Parry's and Endle's monographs on *Lakher* and plains-dwelling *Kacharis*. Based on Lyall's initial works, Stack published a monograph on the *Mikirs*. Furer-Haimendorf may be described as the first professional social anthropologist, who was commissioned by the Government of Assam, prior to Independence, to establish friendly contacts with the tribes of hilly areas of eastern areas. Many of his own early works have been revised and reprinted by Professor Furer-Haimendorf. T.C. Das undertook a five-month long field-work between 1931 and

1936 among the *Purums*, a small Kuki tribal group of Manipur and wrote a monograph on the community (Das, 1945). The significance of this work lies in the fact that in 1958 Rodney Needham of Oxford could attempt a detailed structural analysis of Purum society based on Das's ethnography. Besides Das, J.K. Bose made a study of some aspects of the *Garo social organization* (Bose, 1941). K.P. Chattopadhyay published an account of *Khasi kinship and social organization* in 1941. In view of Bhagabati, as a formal subject of study, anthropology in North-East India received a thrust forward when a department of anthropology was established at the new University of Gauhati in 1948, which became a post-graduate department in 1956. Then we find the arrival of Verrier Elwin as Anthropological Adviser to the Governor of Assam on NEFA (now Arunachal Pradesh). Since 1950s reports on a number of Arunachal tribes have been prepared by anthropologists belonging to the research cell organized by Elwin, though most of these reports are of a preliminary nature. Mention may be made here of The *Apa-Tanis and their Neighbours* by Furer-Haimendorf (1962). In 1963 Burling published his study of a *Garo village* in which he provided a clear analysis of Garo kinship and social structure. In 1967 Chie Nakane, the Japanese anthropologist, published her comparative study of matrilineal systems of the Garo and Khasi. This author has made an attempt to re-examine and re-interpret the material provided by Burling and Nakane (Das, 1982, also see Das, 1985).

Since the late 1950s several research organizations have been engaged in conducting research among the tribal and non-tribal communities of North-East India. These are :(1) Anthropological Survey of India, (2) Census Organization of India, (3) Tribal Research Institutes of Assam, Meghalaya, Arunachal, Mizoram and Nagaland, (4) Agro-Economic Research Centre of North-East India (Jorhat)

etc. Anthropologial Survey of India has published valuable works on a large number of communities. The Survey has also published edited volumes on specific themes such as *Tribal Movements in India*, and *Economies of the Tribes and their Transformation*, both of these are edited by Dr. K.S. Singh. Other thematic works include "Agrarian Situation in India" and "Tribal Education in India", edited by Dr. Ajit K. Danda and others. In all these volumes the North-East India is prominently covered by several scholars. "Cultural Profile of Shillong", edited by Dr. B.B. Goswami, is yet another valuable publication of the Survey. D.N. Mazumdar's "Culture Change in Garo Villages", which has been published by the Survey, is also a very significant work. The other research institutes such as Arunachal Research Department, Nagaland's Directorate of Art and Culture and Assam's Tribal Research Institute have all brought out from time to time several valuable works. Mention may be made here of S.K. Chattopadhyay's edited volume *Tribal Institutions of Meghalaya* published on behalf of Education Department of Meghalaya. One of the important contributions of Agro-Economic Research Centre of Jorhat is *Economic Change in a Mikir village* by P.D. Saikia. This centre has also published a valuable "Bibliography of Studies in Social Sciences in North-East India".

Social anthropological research conducted by University personnel of North-East India has been very significant. Professor M.C. Goswami remains the most prominent figure in the area of social/cultural anthropology of North-East India. Being the Head of the Department of Anthropology in Gauhati University since its inception he had contributed much more than anyone else in the all round development of anthropology in the whole region of North-East India. The felicitation volume published in honour of Prof. Goswami (Sharma and Mazumdar, 1980) describes the works and achievements of Prof. Goswami. As Head of the

Eastern India Law Research Institute of Gauhati High Court, Prof. M.C. Goswami has recently brought out a series of works on "Customary Laws" of several tribals of the region. Besides these works, Professor Goswami has always remained the Ph.D. guide for several workers (including this author) of the region. The space here is not sufficient to mention the individual works of a large number of scholars.

The tradition of research on the tribes is well-established in India. This is more particularly so in case of tribal groups of this region on whom excellent ethnographic accounts have been published. A clear general outline of the tribal cultures has thus emerged as a result of these studies. But majority of the works that are available remain simplistic. They generally do not involve theoretical/conceptual considerations and frameworks.

Tribal groups of this region represent different levels of socio-cultural development. Some have just moved away from their food gathering stage, some have been traditionally prosperous peasants and some belong to the level of "feudal rulers". They all carry the tribal label, and differences among them are pronounced and significant. The tribal heritage is an important component of composite culture of our country. In contrast to peninsular tribal India the tribal cultures in North-East India have demonstrated a rare capacity to survive. At the same time there has emerged amongst them new aspirations. A review of literature on tribal cultures of this region helps us to isolate the following domains of social life which are of great theoretical and social relevance.

1. Loss and fusion of identity,
2. Emergence of new identities,
3. Tribes and the new economic opportunities,
4. Patterns of inter-tribal relations,
5. Patterns of tribal and non-tribal interaction,
6. Revivalism and social-cultural movements among the tribes,

7. Traditional and modern political structures,
8. Religion of the tribes and their interaction with major religions,
9. Matriliny,
10. Youth dormitories,
11. Tribal Property Laws and Land Relations,
12. Tribal Crafts and Technology,
13. Sanitation and indigenous health practices,
14. Folklore, Dance, Music and Art,
15. Customary Laws,
16. Tribal social systems.

It is to be stated that the above themes are still worth studying in the context of the contemporary tribal situation in North-East India. It is indeed deplorable that we have either very scanty or very fragmentary information on most of the above themes in relation to the tribes of North-East India.

This book is then addressed to problems of relationships between tribal and rural peoples of North-East India. Several questions are dealt with in this volume. Some of which are - What is a Tribe? What are the tribes of this region and how are they distributed? What is the nature of the relationships between these groups? How are these relationships affected and influenced by the general processes of modernization and existing social-political situations within the Indian Union? Attempts are also made to deal with some of the above mentioned sixteen major themes, depending on the existing published material as well as the material gathered by this author from amongst several tribes of North-East India during last ten years.

North-East : The Land of Seven Sisters

Every North-East India society is obviously "tribal" or "civilized". Membership in either set is based upon ecological adaptation. In general, civilized

people farm irrigated rice in valleys and river basins, tribesmen cultivate rice swiddens *(jhuming)* in the hills. To define a "Tribe" is very complex. Anthropologists use the word "Tribe" in several distinct, but related ways: to stipulate an evolutionary stage *(i.e.,* Service, 1962), to distinguish one type of society from others (as in India, Africa and Southeast Asia; Moerman, 1968), and to label any population whose members share a common culture. We shall try to understand the tribal situation in North-East India in terms of their structural elements and common cultural factors. In fact the groups in question have never been completely isolated nor have they been entirely independent of the dominant political and economic structures of the region (see Goswami, 1971). Many of their cultural features reflect long-term contact with the great religions and traditions of the country and its neighbourhood.

The North-East India is today divided into seven autonomous units. These units of Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh and Tripura and have the status of State. About three quarters of this region are rugged hilly terrain, while remainig one quarter is split into Brahmaputra and Barak valleys. Broadly speaking the hills of North-East India constitute eastern part of the mountain wall formed by the Himalaya. North-Eastern region occupies an unique place in the socio-cultural, biological, linguistic and economic map of India. Perhaps a few reqions of the country can be said to be so lavishly endowed as this region in respect of mineral and hydel resources. Even then the general economic profile of this region is one of backwardness. The setting up of the North-Eastern Council (NEC) has shown Government's concern about speedy and stimulating development of the region.

The hill areas of the region were administered, until 1937, as 'backward tracts' exclusively under Chief Commissioner's jurisdiction and exercised by the British District Officers. Under the

Government of India Act, 1935, the Mizo Hills, the Naga Hills, the North-Cachar Hills, and the North-Eastern Frontier Tracts were called 'excluded' areas, excluded from ministerial jurisdiction; and the Garo Hills, the Khasi and Jaintia Hills and the Mikir Hills 'partially excluded' areas. The excluded areas were further guarded by the 'Inner Line' that prevented the entry of outsiders without permit. The Inner Line regulation continues to be in force in many hill areas. After the Independence of India some re-organization took place and thus by the year 1971 seven separate administrative units described above were created from the erstwhile united state of Assam. There exists perfect amity and coordination between these seven units in launching developmental schemes through several agencies, such as NEC, and the phrase 'Unit of Seven Sisters' works as a guiding principle within the constitutional framework of India.

In fact the four political units of the region, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram, are hilly areas and these are also predominantly 'tribal' in ethnic composition, with over 80 per cent population being tribal in each unit. Even in other three States (Assam, Manipur and Tripura) there are vast hilly areas which are inhabited by the tribals; the non-tribal populations are in majority only in plains areas. This geoethnic character has had important social and political implications. Tribal ethnicity could here be formulated and expressed in territorial terms, the result of which has been the emergence of 'Hill States'.

Ecology and Geography

The North-East India features various forms of land reliefs. The eastern Great Himalayan mountain lies in the whole Arunachal Pradesh, which bands into Patkoi, Naga hills, Manipur hills in the direction of North-East to South-West in Tirap District

of Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Manipur States respectively. The ranges also extend up to Mizoram hills and Tripura hills. The extension of Deccan plateau of peninsular India also finds place in this region, such as Garo, Khasi and Jaintia hills and Mikir/Rengma hills. The part of the North India plains is also in existence here as Brahmaputra valley in whole of Assam State and in the South and West foothills of Meghalaya.

The plains area having a height of less than 200 m occupies whole of the Brahmaputra valley in Assam. It is a fertile and levelled valley formed by Brahmaputra river. It is a rice, tea, jute and cotton producing area but invariably it experiences hazards of flood during rainy season.

Imphal valley in Manipur is although located at the height of between 500 and 1000 metres but it is also fertile river valley. Garo, Khasi and Jaintia hills form Meghalaya plateau, and lie between the height of 500 and 2000 m. Both, wet rice cultivation and *Jhuming*, are done depending on altitudes.

In Arunachal Pradesh the Great Himalaya lies from west to the east in the State. Kangto Peak is located at the height of 7089 m which is the highest peak in N.-E. India. "Sela Pass" is situated at the height of 4740 m. The height gradually decreases down to 2300 m, when the Himalayan range comes to the eastern most point. Arunachal Pradesh thus consists of snow peaks in the north and rugged mountains and valleys in the south.

The Brahmaputra has the dominant control over the drainage system of N.-E. India. Brahmaputra is an antecedent river which enters into territory in Siyang District of Arunachal Pradesh crossing the Himalaya. In the long profile flowing N.-S. direction up to N.-E. corner of Assam and thence flowing in N.-E. to S.-W. direction in Assam, it receives number of tributaries mingling from North East and South directions and thus makes

a dendtrite pattern of drainage system. Besides, two other small systems also exist: (1) The Barak system of Cachar plains comprising Barak river and the tributaries originating from North Cachar hills, west Manipur hills and North Mizo hills, (2) Few small rivers originating from Mizo hills and Manipur hills and flowing southward direction have their small drainage system exclusively in Mizoram.

The climate of the N.-E. India varies from tropical to alpine snow-clad Tundra types. The tropical climatic zone occupies up to the height of 800 metres in Assam valley, Cachar plains, and Mizo hills. The sub-tropical climatic zone falls in between the contours of 800 m and 1200 m. in Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Mizoram and Meghalaya plateau. The southern slopes of Meghalaya plateau emerges as the first barrier in the way of Bay of Bengal branch of N.W. Monsoon, hence the area between Cherrapunji and Mawsynram receives highest rainfall in the world (*i.e.* around 1300 mm).

The average annual rainfall in Assam, Manipur and Tripura is 2990 cm (1961 Census). The temperature in Arunachal Pradesh varies from freezing point in winter to 26.7° C in summer. In Nagaland, temperature rises up to 27° C in hottest seasons. In Manipur it varies from 33° C to 40° C and in the same way tropical climate also prevails in Tripura.

The forest in N.-E. India varies from tropical evergreen (up to 1200 m), in Assam valley and Cachar plains; to mountains sub-tropical in the hills of Manipur, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh and Garo Hills of Meghalaya.

Soils are rich in humus content in North-East India. The Brahmaputra plains, Cachar plain, Tripura State and Imphal valley consist of alluvial soils bodied by the rivers. Same type of soils are also marked in flat valleys of Apatani, Kaya, Sangta Chhug, etc., in Arunachal Pradesh. In Manipur,

clay to clayey loam soil is found. In the Meghalaya plateau, Karbi hills and some part of Manipur hills lateristic soil is found but sandy loam is predominant in rest of the hills areas.

TWO

OUTLINE OF REGIONAL ETHNIC HISTORY

THE culture of North-East India has evolved through several centuries of fusion. This culture is the sum total of "the primitive and the advanced, contributed both by Aryan and non-Aryan elements. Beginning with the prehistoric period, the land has been exposed to invasions from all directions; but with the dawn of history her links became closer, both politically and culturally with the rest of India" (Choudhury, 1959 : 2). The land of North-East, or "Pragjyotisa Kamarupa", had been known not only to the Buddhist world but also to the writers of the Epics, *Puranas* and other ancient works, and in no small measure to the classical writers. The names of the people and the place-names of the region have close links with the known history of India. According to Choudhury "the communications between the hills and the plains were not very difficult and, therefore, in the midst of bewildering diversities, there was at times an unity of purpose which led both the hill-men and the dwellers of the plains to fight together against their common enemy" (1959 : 5). Speaking of the composite culture of the region Choudhury has opined that "the whole structure of the socio-economic life of the non-Aryans was based more or less upon the same practices as were followed in an advanced Hindu society, and the non-Aryans in general greatly affected the whole Assamese social structure" (1959 : 7). In the domain of econo-

mic life also various elements equally contributed to the growth of common culture of the region. With the foundation of the political dynasty, Kamarupa became a great centre of art, literature and culture. The language of the region contained more non-Aryan words than those of pure Sanskrit.

Pragjyotisa finds mention in the *Sankhyayana Grhyasamgraha* as the 'land of sunrise'. Kautilya has also made important reference to many places of Kamarupa. However, the best work containing both cultural and political history of Ancient Assam is *Kalika Purana*, which was composed in Assam itself, in or about the tenth century A.D. The *Kamarupa Yatra*, a Sanskrit work, composed in Assam; based on the *Yogini Tantra*, the *Kalika Purana* and the *Kularnava*, deals with the mode of worship of *Kamakhya*. It also records the origin of the names of *Pragjyotisa* and *Kamarupa*. A review of all the ancient works, however, shows that "in these documents the history and traditions have been mixed together, and no chronicle depicts a complete picture of the cultural condition of the people or gives a detailed account of all the rulers" (Choudhury, 1959 : 16; S.K. Bhuyan, IHQ., V, pp. 460-65).

Pliny in his *Natural History* (vi) not only refers to a number of people of Frontier and trans-Himalayan regions, some having unusual features, probably referring to some Tibeto-Burman tribe of Assam in the North, but also speaks of races from the chain of Exodus, of which a spur is called the 'Imaus' The Exodus is identified with the Himalayas, and Imaus stands probably for some hills in Assam. The same references are found in *Arrian* (Megasthenes and Arrian, p. 182). Among the people mentioned are the Chisiotosagi or Chiriotosagi, identified with the Kiratas. Pliny mentions of the Mandai. It is possible to identify Mandai with the Garos, as they are called *Mande* (man).

The other important classical sources mention-

ing peoples and places, which may possibly be identified as in Assam, are the *Periplus* of the *Erythrean Sea* of the first centure A.D., & *Ptolemy's Geography* of the second century A.D. In *Alberuni's India*, Kamarupa is mentioned as lying far to the east of Kanauj, the moutains of which stretch as far as the sea (Sachau, *Alberuni's India*, p. 201). The accounts of the later travellers like Qazim, Tavernier and Csoma de Koros also supply us with valuable information. Of the archaeological evidences mention may be made of coins, inscriptions, local epigraphs, prehistoric finds and other ancient remains (Noliths and Megaliths), the monuments of historical period are all very important since they throw light on the political and socio-religious life of the people.

The name Pragjyotisa is commonly associated with the Lauhitya, Kamarupa and Kamakhya. It is also associated with all the rulers of the period, beginning with Narak-Bhagadatta. The name appears to be a Sanskritization of some non-Aryan formation. According to Nath (1949: 4-5) the original name "Prag-Zuthis" became Prag-jyotisa. B.K. Kakati connects Prag-jyotisa with the topography of the land and derives it from an Austric phrase: Pagar-juh (jo)-tic (c' = ch), meaning a region of extensive hills (1948 : 6). At the same time Choudhury feels that the interpretation of the name as a place of 'eastern astrology' is justified by a number of references to its association with the Solar cult and the planetary worship. *Udayacala* of the *Samhitasand* the *Puranas* was no other than Pragjyotisa-Kamarupa (J.A.R.S, V, pp. 117-18). The *Kalika* and other *Puranas* point to the prevalence of the solar cult and fire worship in the land and the Assamese festival *Bihu* is associated with fire worship and fertility rites, the relics of a vanishing Austric and Alpine-Iranian culture in ancient Assam. There is a general belief that "there were apparently wave after wave of migrations and the invaders belonged to the 'Indo-Chinese' linguistic family, of which

the two most important sub-families are the 'Mon-Khmer' and the 'Tibeto-Burman'. The third, Siamese-Chinese, includes Shan, which was spoken by the Ahoms, the last of these invaders. The Mon-Khmer speakers appear to have come earlier than the others. They were apparently driven by subsequent 'Tibeto-Burman' hordes into the Khasi Hills which is the only part in which the sub-family now exists. Of the Tibeto-Burman sub-family, there were three groups, *viz.*, Naga, Kuki-Chin and Bodo. The Naga and Kuki speakers were driven to the hills and Bodo became the dominant language. It includes all the surviving non-Aryan languages of the plains, the Garo Hills and the North Cachar Hills. Kachari, Mech, Garo, Dimasa, Tipra, Lalung, Rabha, and Chutiya are derivations of Bodo" (Barkataki, 1969 : 2).

A very significant fact about North-East is the fusion of Mongolian and Aryan cultures. However, the fact remains that although Aryan (Hinduized, Sanskritic) linguistic and cultural impact has been rampant here but those who brought in the new socio-cultural order were numerically very small from the beginning. The result is that the powerful Ahoms, who ruled over Assam for over six hundred years and who in course of time not only adopted the Hindu religion, discarding their own, but also forgot their own Ahom language and adopted Assamese, the Sanskritic language. We shall later discuss in greater details about the Ahoms, and processes of cultural revivalism amongst them, and among other tribes. The complete disappearance of languages of Kachari and Rabha could also be attributed to same historical factors. "As has generally happened all over non-Aryan India, the acceptance of the composite religion and culture of Gengetic India and its way of life by the ruling classes brought in an easy and inevitable merging of the entire non-Aryan tribe or people within the ever-expanding Brahmanical Hindu world which had the Aryan Sanskrit as

its vehicle. In the process of the 'Sanskritization', as it might be called, place-names in non-Aryan territories would normally be translated into Sanskrit, or Sanskritized. Brahmaputra and Lauhitya, names of great rivers of Assam, and Pragjyotisa and Kamarupa, names of the province, are in all likelihood approximations to Sanskrit of pre-Aryan names. Banikanta Kakati suggested that Pragjyotisa might be a Sanskritization of a possible Austric group of words like *pau* (= hill) + *ger* (= hill) + *jo* (= high) + *tic* (long) = '(land of) high and long mountains', and *Kamarupa* and *Kamakhya* he sought to connect with an Austric basic word meaning 'a grave, a corpse', the place-names being connected with the legend found in the *Purana* of *Sati's* dead body being cut up and a part of it falling in Kamakhya hill in Kamarupa. Lauhitya is of course the Tibeto-Burman *Luhit*, the meaning of which is lost; but Bishnu Rabha has proposed to find in the name Brahmaputra a Bodo *bhullambuthur* meaning 'making a gurgling noise (Chatterji, 1955 : 17). Thus, the Sanskritic linkages with place-names of Mongoloid and Austric origin signifies an important aspect of cultural development in North-east region. The earstwhile Assam (or the present North-east) has witnessed the synthesis of cultures right from the prehistoric times.

At the time of the British power in India there were six major tribal States under Hinduized rulers in North-East such as the Koch, the Tripuri, the Jaintia, the Kachari, the Ahom and the Meithei (Imphal valley). All their ruling families enjoyed some sort of Khatriya status and followed the Brahmanical ritual order. Hinduism had important influence over many tribal groups. Of them the most Hinduized group has been that of the Meithei, living in the Imphal valley, amongst whom the Hinduism was introduced as early as during the 15th century. Alongwith this group the Hinduized Kachari and Tripuri claim themselves to be of

Khatriya status. "The Hinduized Khasis on the Sylhet side assume the surnames of Singh and Roy" (Chaube, 19 73 : 36). The influence of Hinduism in the whole region has been very great from an early period. The Assam Census of 1881 noted that "wherever they (the tribals) are not protected by mountains or by jungles, the non-Aryan residents invariably have yielded, and are yielding, to the over-powering fascination of the Hindu religion" *(Census Report of Assam, 1881).* Buddhism also has equally old tradition of influence in the region. In 1961 Census report nine tribal groups returned either partly or wholly as Buddhists from Arunachal Pradesh alone. These are : (1) Khamba, (2) Khampti, (3) Memba, (4) Monpa, (5) Nocte, (6) Ramo, (7) Sherdukpen, (8) Singpho, and (9) Tangsa. Other Buddhist tribes of the region are Chakma (Tripura), Tai speaking Man (Meghalaya), and Mag (Tripura).

In the medieval period of Assam's history, the Ahoms could establish their Kingdom in upper Assam in the territories of the old Chutiya and Bodo Kachari Kingdoms. These were the true tribal Kingdoms who were to be ultimately influenced by the Hinduism. Similarly "through the common economy and political organization with the Hindus of the plains, the Hindu civilization of the plains penetrated deeply among the Jaintias, who are matrilineal hill-dwellers" (Chie Nakane, 1967 : 97). Although the emerging powers (Ahoms, British) gradually took over the state systems of these tribes but their new cultural (Hinduized) way of life could not be altered. Thus when the Jaintia Raja returned to Jowai after 1835, he did carry with him the Sakta deity. Reliable history of the region, then known as Kamrupa, is first found in the narrative of the Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsiang, who visited the country about A.D. 640, when King Kumara Bhaskara Varman ruled. It is reported in *Imperial Gazetteer of India* (=Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1908 : 27) that soon after Hiuen Tsiang's departure, the region fell into

the hands of a line of aboriginal chiefs who were subsequently converted to Hinduism. The Surma valley, at any rate, was usually independent of the Kings of Kamarupa. The early history of this tract is even more obscure than that of the Brahmaputra valley. The copperplate inscriptions, however, suggest that in the first half of the thirteenth century it was ruled by a king named Govinda Deva, and subsequently by his son Isana Deva, who were all Hindus.

A few years later "Biswa Singh laid the foundation of the Koch Kingdom, after defeating the local chiefs; and built himself a capital in Cooch Bihar. The Koch tribe spoke a language closely allied to those of the Kacharis, Tipperas, Lalungs, Chutiyas and Garos. Biswa Singh was succeeded by his son Nar Narayan, who extended his kingdom in all directions. He defeated the chiefs of Dimarua, Jaintia, Khairam, Cachar, and Tippera, and also the Ahom raja" (*Imperial Gazetteer of India*, 1908 : 29).

Early in the 13th century an event occurred at the eastern extremity of the valley which was destined to change the whole course of Assam history. This "was the invasion of the Ahoms, a Shan tribe from the Ancient Kingdom of Mungmau or Pong, which was situated in the upper portion of the Irrawaddy valley. Sukapha, the first of this group, crossed the Patkai moutains in 1228 with a small following. It was at that time that Sibsagar was inhabited by petty tribes of Bodo affinities (Morans and Borahis) in one area under Chutiya rulers, while the Kacharis occupied the western part of Sibsagar. Sukapha settled down among the Morans and Borahis, who were absorbed into the Ahom community. A few years later the Ahoms fought with the Chutiyas. A number of Ahoms from Gargaon were settled at Sadiya. Meanwhile there had been numerous expeditions against various Naga tries. In 1490 the first war between the Ahoms and the Kacharis occurred,

by which the Ahoms were defeated on the banks of the river Dikho. In 1536 hostilities again broke out, the Kachari king was killed and his capital at Dimapur was sacked. The power of the Ahoms continued to grow and their dominions to expand, and 'there was almost constant warfare between them and one or other of their neighbours - Naras, Jaintias, Nagas, Kacharis, and Koch *(Imperial Gazetteer of India,* 1908 : 31). The Ahoms won several wars and they established their supremacy.

In 1706, Rudra Singh, one of the most powerful of Ahom monarchs, invaded the new Kachari Kingdom with a large force consisting of as many as 35,000 men, occupied and sacked Maibong, the new Kachari capital. The Kachari king sought refuge at Khaspur in the plains of Cachar, which became the new capital. Then a Kachari prince married the daughter of the King of Tipperah and "received the valley of the Barak as dowry" (Barkataki, 1969 : 64). The Kacharis ruled this new country in peace "as a feudatory power under the suzerainty of the Ahoms till they got into trouble with the Kings of Manipur and Burma. The latter was growing very powerful at that time and they were trying to advance towards (the then) British territory, namely, Sylhet, which was a part of Bengal" (Barkataki, 1969 : 64).

The Kacharis, who settled in the North Cachar Hills, call themselves Dimasa. This word is supposed to have been derived from Hidimba (Dimapur being a shortened form of Hidimbapur), a demoness, through whom the second Pandava prince Bhima, according to the legend, produced a son, Ghatotkachha. This origin of the Kachari kings is, however, believed to have been "an invention of Brahmin Pundits" (Barkataki, 1969 : 64), made after the formal conversion of the Kachari kings to Hinduism in A.D. 1790, when an imaginary genealogy going back to several centuries (including hundreds of kings) was drawn up.

The Kacharis have two distinct divisions,

those in the valley of Brahmaputra called as Bodo or Boro and the other division which ruled around Dhansiri valley with their capital at Dimapur and then migrated to North Cachar Hills. The Dimasas ruled over most parts of North Cachar Hills areas which was inhabited by different tribes such as Kukis, Hmars, and the Zemi Nagas. A significant cultural aspect of the Dimasa-Kacharis of the North Cachar Hills areas is that while most of their neighbouring tribal groups (Kukis and Zemi Nagas) have embraced Christianity, they themselves have adopted Hinduism. A Small Section of the Dimasa-Kacharis continues to follow its old religious order.

The earliest inhabitants of Assam are thus "the various off shoots of the great `Indo-Chinese Hordes . . ." (*Imperial Gazetteer*, 1908 : 49). At the same time, the Assam valley must have been colonised by Hindus from the West at a very early date; and the Hindu princes were reigning at the eastern end near Sadiya at the time of the 'invasion' of the Chutiyas, a tribe of Bodo origin, about a thousand years ago. The Chutiyas overthrew the Hindus, but gave way before the Ahoms who extended their domination over the whole valley. Through expansion the Ahoms overthrew the Koch kings, a dynasty which had attained considerable power in North-eastern Bengal; and they also repulsed the Mohammedans, who had made several attempts upon the valley and succeeded in holding for a considerable time the earstwhile two lower districts of Goalpara and Kamarupa (see for details *Imperial Gazetteer*, 1908).

The numerical strength of the major tribes of the region in 1901 was: Kacharis, 240,000; Garos, 128,000; Rabha, 67,000, Mech, 75,000; Mikirs, 87,000; Lalungs, 36,000; Lushais, 63,000; Kukis, 56,000; Manipuris, 256,000; Nagas, 162,000; Khasis, 178,000 and Miris, 47,000 (*Imperial Gazetteer of India*, 1901 : 50). According to the same source (1901 : 52) the following caste groups were

numerically strong : Koch (222,000), Raj Bansis (120,000), Kalitas (203,000), Nadiyals (195,000), Ahoms (178,000), Jugis (161,000), and Kewats (149,000).

The processes of Hinduization among the tribes of North-East India has a long tradition. Let us review certain examples from published sources. Through a study of the Song Koch population of the Garo Hills, Majumdar (1968) has shown the different phases of transition from tribal religion to Hinduism among different groups of Koch. He found that among the Chapra section of Koch total absorption to Hinduism has been accomplished and among them the Brahmin priest acts on all occasions as an intermediary between men and gods. In view of Majumdar the group of Song Koch stands between the extreme tribal and extreme Hinduized sections of the Koch tribe. Among the deities adopted from Hindu pantheon Kamakhya occupies the most prominent place. Two other deities from Hindu pantheon which have been adopted by the Koch are *Sib* and *Kali*. The essential part of worship of Kamakhya and Kali is sacrifice.

Dr. Kakati has traced the origin of Kamakhya worship in Assam to non-Aryan origin. According to him the worship of these deities were prevalent among the *Kiratas*. However, the *Yoni* and *Linga* are not associated by the Song Koch with the rites of Kamakhya and Siba respectively.

Here we can also illustrate the example of Rongdani Rabha who, according to Majumdar (1968), "represent only the first stage or the incipient stage of Sanskritization, the stage which they have aligned themselves with the Hindu castes but have yet to enter the Hindu society". Majumdar has also provided relative positions of several tribal groups in the framework of Sanskritization. He writes "Among the Koch, the Dalu, the Hajong as well as among the Garo who have become converts to Vaishnab Hinduism, we find all the aspects of traditional Hinduism, namely, ceremonial uncleanliness, strict endogamy, taboo of 'unclean' animals

(pigs and fowls), adoption of deities from Hindu pantheon, utilization of services of professional Brahmin priest in birth, death and marriage ceremonies and also in worshipping Hindu deities, utilization of services of other Hindu professional castes such as the barber. Among the Rongdani Rabha, however, none of the above aspects of culture change are to be observed. The most dominant aspect of Sanskritization among the Rongdani Rabha is their strict abstinence from beef and strict prohibition of interdining with beef-eating non-Hindu people, such as Muslims and the Garo". Ultimately what emerges is that "from Rongdanis to Hajongs there is a gradual infusion of more and more aspects of traditional Hinduism as well as traditional Hindu social framework characterized by absence of matrilineal clans, adoption of Indo-Aryan kinship system". Thus we find the Rongdani in their pure tribal form, while the Hajong merging as a purely Hindu caste, albeit at the lower end of hierarchy; and the Koch occupying an intermediate position, because in them we find good blending of traditional Hinduism with forms of pre-Sanskritized religion and also aspects of a pre-Sanskritized social framework represented by prevalence of matrilineal clan organization combined with a matching kinship terminology".

Gait had observed way back in 1905 that "at the present day the word Koch is a term of ambiguity. In Assam proper it has become the name of a Hindu caste, into which are received the converts to Hinduism from he ranks of the Kachari, Lalung, Mikir (Karbi) and other tribes; and as the process of conversion is still continuing the number of persons described as Koch are increasing rapidly. In North Bengal and Goalpara, on the other hand, it is a term which is falling in disrepute; and it has to a great extent been abandoned in favour of the appeliation Rajbanshi".

Das Gupta (1969) has noted that "before the launching of the Khatriya movement, all the Raj-

banshi, especially the commoners, used the surname 'Das'. Side by side, there were a few other denotating occupation specialization or some sort of economic stratification. The person owning 100 bighas or more of arable land were *pradhani*, owners of a *mandali* (group of villages) were *andal*, those who were educationally advanced and engaged in ministerial job took *Sarkar*, business were *byapari*, well-to-do people took *paramanik* or *basunia* and persons entrusted with the offering of food to the household deities were *Adhikari*. Even today these surnames are used by the elite class among the Rajbanshi. They have not gone for newer surnames; whereas 'Das' embraced people pertaining to different occupations. There were Das potters, Das agriculturists, Das blaksmiths, and with the acceptance of sacred thread there was a spontaneous craze for getting a typical Khatriya-like surname and subsequently *Burman*, *Singha* and *Roy* were found to be convenient". In this way the host of surnames developed.

Arrival of the British in North-East India goes back to 1761 when "the East India Company and the Nawab of Bengal (through their combined armed forces) assaulted Tripura" (Chaube, 1973 : 3). In 1762 Captain Verelst "led three companies of armed Indian Sepoys towards Manipur. . . . In 1765, the Company acquired the *dewani* of Bengal and its power reached Sikkim, Bhutan, Cooch Behar, Assam and Arrakan besides Garo and Khasi Hills", (Chaube, 1973 : 3). In 1774, Captain Henniker made a raid on the plains territories of the Jaintia Kingdom. "In 1789 the Company intervened in the Southern side of Garo Hills. The first Garo chief to establish 'treaty' with the Company and to be recognized as a *Zemindar* was Renghta" (Chaube, 1973 : 4). Ultimately "the military defeat of Burma and the signing of the Treaty of Yandabo (1826) led to the renunciation of Burma's claims on the territories of Assam, Manipur and their neighbourhood as well as the cession of Tenasserim and Arrakan to the British

. . . Assam hills came under British" (Chaube, 1973 : 5). In 1826 David Scott was appointed the Senior Commissioner of Assam. A Junior Commissioner was posted in Upper Assam. In 1833 Prince Purandar Singh was given some 'royal' recognition (see Chaube, 1973 : 5). Gradually the Sadiya, Muttock and Cachar plains areas had been reached. "In 1835, the Jaintia king was removed and his territory merged with British India. The Khasi Chiefships were reduced to 25 in number under four kinds of chiefs: Siem, Wahadadar, Sirdar and Lyngdoh" (Mackenzie, 1884: 237-38).

In 1874 the whole of earstwhile Assam was declared as a "Scheduled District". Its status changed to Chief Commissionership in 1912 and it became a Governor's Province in 1921. Professor Venkata Rao (1976) has described in great details the political development in the tribal areas in North-East India during the period commencing from 1874 to 1974. In his opinion 'political developments were not uniform in all places. It was rapid in the Khasi Hills and Jaintia Hills because the capital of Assam was located in the Khasi Hills. In other areas particularly in Arunachal Pradesh (then NEFA) there was no political development (Rao, 1976 : 540). Some of the conclusions drawn by Professor Rao are as follows:

> Political conciousness was at different stages in different places. It was dominant in Khasi hills and dormant in Garo Hills. There was no political conciousness in Arunachal Pradesh. . . . The Nagas, Mizos, Khasis and Garos fought and got Statehood and Union Territory. Arunachal Pradesh got a Union Territory without any effort (Rao 1976 : 540).

Yet another significant aspect of the political development is the establishment of the district councils in 1952. While there were only five of them in 1952 in North-East India it rose to fourteen

in 1974. 'The District Councils were created to protect the characteristically tribal political systems' (Rao, 1976 : 541). Of all the areas of North-East the Arunachal witnessed tremendous political development, "with the starting of a three-tier Panchayat system in 1969, adult franchise in 1971, agency council in 1967, Pradesh council and counsellors in 1972, and a Legislative Assembly in 1975" (Rao, 1976 : 541). The Inner Line Regulation is still in force in many areas such as Arunachal, Nagaland and Mizoram. There is general restriction in many hilly areas for non-locals to acquire landed property. Besides several measures taken up by the government to allow the tribesmen to retain their own customs and institutions intact, tremendous social change and economic development is taking place, side by side with political development, in all rural areas of North-East India.

The main objective of this chapter has been to provide a brief ethno-historical background of the region. We have mainly analysed the historical and anthropological dimensions of integration during pre-colonial and colonial phases. Ethno-cultural and political processes in North-East had picked up on the eve of transfer of power. These processes are described and discussed at length in Chapters 6 and 7 with special focus on the issues such as articulation and redefinition of ethnic identities, growing nativistic movements aimed at cultural revivalism and de-sanskritization, and emerging cultural and political aspirations of people manifested through tribal movements ranging from 'local/regional autonomy' to 'armed insurgency'.

THREE

PATTERNS OF SOCIAL STRUCTURE :
Fallacy of Unilineal Models

Comparative Analysis and Descent Theory

DURING past few decades several works on tribal social structures of North-East India are published, but in no work do we witness the impact of new theoretical developments taking place within social anthropology. North-East India, for example, could have been fruitfully made the focal point for testing componential analyses, conceptual conflicts centring on descent, kinship, and filiation; and for re-viewing the themes of bilaterality, ambilineality and double descent. On double descent system, however, the work of D. Danda (1978) is worth mentioning here. Concerning published material on matrilineal social structures this author has made elsewhere attempt towards re-interpretation of such material in the light of bilaterality and filiation (Das, 1982). A brief summary of the same is provided here with some additional comments. Danda (1978) has provided an analysis of double descent system among the Dimasa of Assam. She has observed that among the Dimasa "the patri and matri clans, called as *seng-fong* and *jaddi* (or *julu)* respectively, are exogamous, non-totemistic and non-localized" (Danda, 1978 : 44). There are altogether 42 patriclans and 42 matriclans found today among the Dimasa, but originally they had "only seven patriclans and no matriclans" (Danda, 1978 : 49). The blood relationship among the Dimasa is traced through both the male and female ancestors, and male agnates and female agnates are called by distinct terms.

But since the "clan solidarity is over-emphasized by the Dimasa, the lineage as such has no specific function in their social structure" (Danda 1978 : 66).

In *Social Structure in South East Asia* (Murdock, 1960), Leach attempts to refute the traditional axioms of structural functionalists, who have concerned themselves primarily with the internal social problems which social structures meet. Eggan, in Murdock volume (1960 : 49), states, "Social structures have jobs to do; they have to provide orderliness and continuity in human relations". Leach also noted that "Social structure reflects and is constrained by the economic order, by technology, and by numerous other components of culture" (1960 : 123). Sahlins (1963 : 49), in concurring, notes that "Social structure functions not merely to organize human relations, but to sustain human existence". Most scholars have thus emphasized the relationship between abundance of resources, adequate exploitative techniques, group stability, and unilineality; and between poor habitat, rudimentary techniques of exploitation, unstable settlements and non-unilineality. In case of many North-East India tribes, as author's review of existing literature suggests, these particular relationships are not strictly applied. With the help of few examples (both from patrilineal and matrilineal systems) we shall try to review below the 're-distributive' mechanisms such as 'segmentation', alternate residence, adoption, dual inheritance and complementary filiation (matrifiliation and patrifiliation). We shall start by examining the existing material on matrilineal tribes of North-East India such as Khasi, Garo, Lalung and Koch, and then the partilineal example shall be taken up.

There are two different ways of looking at the kinship systems, representing two dominant trends in the study of kinship in social anthropology. These two approaches are conveniently named as Descent and Alliance theories (Dumont, 1961;

Schneider, 1965). Decent theory follows Radcliffe-Brown's formulation and deals with actual relations between persons and lineages. Fortes (1949, 1959) makes this position clear and distinguishes between descent filiation and complementary filiation. Descent according to Fortes is fundamentally a jural concept in that it provides the connecting link between the external and internal aspects of these groups (1959:207). Since descent confers attributes of status relating to a person's place in the external social structure it is bound to operate by placing person in categories or groups (1959 : 208).

In contrast to descent filiation is universally bilateral and does not depend on the recognition of descent or the existence of descent groups. That means, in a patrilineal society, an individual's tie of filiation with his mother is not lost and as a result of this he retains some rights. Fortes says 'in a segmentary patrilineal descent system matrifiliation endows a child with attributes of jural status submerging claims and obligations to its mother's lineage, without which it cannot be a normal jural person' (1959 : 209). Fortes refers to this as complementary filiation, *i.e.*, the ties of an individual through the parent who does not give him his descent status. The concept of descent, so central to the structural analysis of kinship organization, has been a subject of controversy for a long time. Firth (1963) lists a number of criteria of recruitment for formation of viable descent groups: (1) transmission of name; (2a) title of specific resource, (2b) participation in a specific occasion; (3) generational depth defined by cultural rules, agreement of participants, or a combination of the two, (4) lineality of descent, (5) point of attachment of ego to the descent group, (6) residence rule, and (7) marriage rule. However, in considering unilineal and bilateral descent groups together Firth recognizes a great deal of similarity between them. The particular

issue in the concept of descent, with which we are concerned, is it's distinction from filiation, to which topic Fortes (1963) addresses himself in his analysis of the Ashanti Kinship system. Whereas Seligman once regarded Ashanti as having a "submerged patrilineal descent line" in addition to full-fledged matrilineal descent, Fortes considered it to be a case of 'complementary patrifiliation with matrilineal descent'.

Another important question which has not received much attention is the issue of kindred. This is because the anthropologists, in general, are preoccupied in describing "unilineal descent system". Mitchel (1963) grants that the kindred is generally limited to cognatic societies, if it is defined in terms of ego's equal filiation to paternal and maternal kin. Lounsbury (1964) suspects that there are not very many truly 'non-cognatic' systems, in the sense of their *lacking* a bilateral genealogical reckoning of personal kinship (original emphasis).

Since 1930 British Social Anthropology has embodied a well-defined set of ideas and objectives which derive directly from the teaching of Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown . . . this unity of aim is summed up in the statement that "British social anthropology is *functionalist* and concerned with the *comparative analysis of social structures*" (Leach, 1961 : 1, original emphasis). But most of the anthropologists, according to Leach, are giving up the attempt to make comparative generalization; instead they have begun to write impeccably detailed historical ethnographies of particular peoples. He believed that to understand what is happening in social anthropology we need to "go right back to the beginning and rethink basic issues . . . really elementary matters such as what we mean by marriage or descent or the unity of siblings, . . ." (Leach 1961 : 1). Radcliffe-Brown's instructions were that it is necessary to compare societies with reference to one particular aspect . . . the economic system, the political

system, or the kinship system (Radcliffe-Brown, 1940 : xii). A serious objection, in Leach's view, is that the typology makers never explain why they choose one frame of reference rather than another. Of many frustrations of this kind one is the category opposition patrilineal/matrilineal. Ever since Morgan began writing of the Iroquois, it has been customary for anthropologists to distinguish unilineal from non-unilineal descent systems, and among the former to distinguish patrilineal societies from matrilineal societies.

The categories of patrilineal and matrilineal societies are so obvious that it is extremely difficult to break out of the straitjacket of thought which the categories themselves impose. Because the type-finding social anthropologist conducts his whole argument in terms of particular instances rather than of generalized patterns, he is constantly tempted to attach exaggerated significance to those features of social organization which happen to be prominent in the societies of which he himself has first-hand experience (Leach, 1961 : 4). Leach's view is that while the consideration of mathematical and logical models may help the anthropologist to order his theoretical arguments in an intelligent way, his actual procedure should be non-mathematical. The same structural pattern may turn up in any kind of society . . . a mathematical approach makes no prior assumption that unilineal systems are basically different from non-unilineal systems or patrilineal structures from matrilineal structures. On the contrary, the principle of parity leads us to discount all rigid category distinctions of this kind. As we know Fortes' concept of complementary filiation was devised to describe double unilineal element in the matrilineal Ashanti and the patrilineal Tallensi societies while rejecting the notion that these societies actually possess double unilineal systems (Fortes, 1953 : 33; 1959). Leach argues that from one point of view complementary filiation is simply an inverse form of Malinowski's notion of 'Sociological Paternity'

as applied in the matrilineal context of Trobriand society (1961 : 5). We find that the concept became necessary to Fortes precisely because he had decided that the more familiar and more obvious notion of double unilineal descent was inappropriate.

Comparative Analysis of Matrilineal Systems

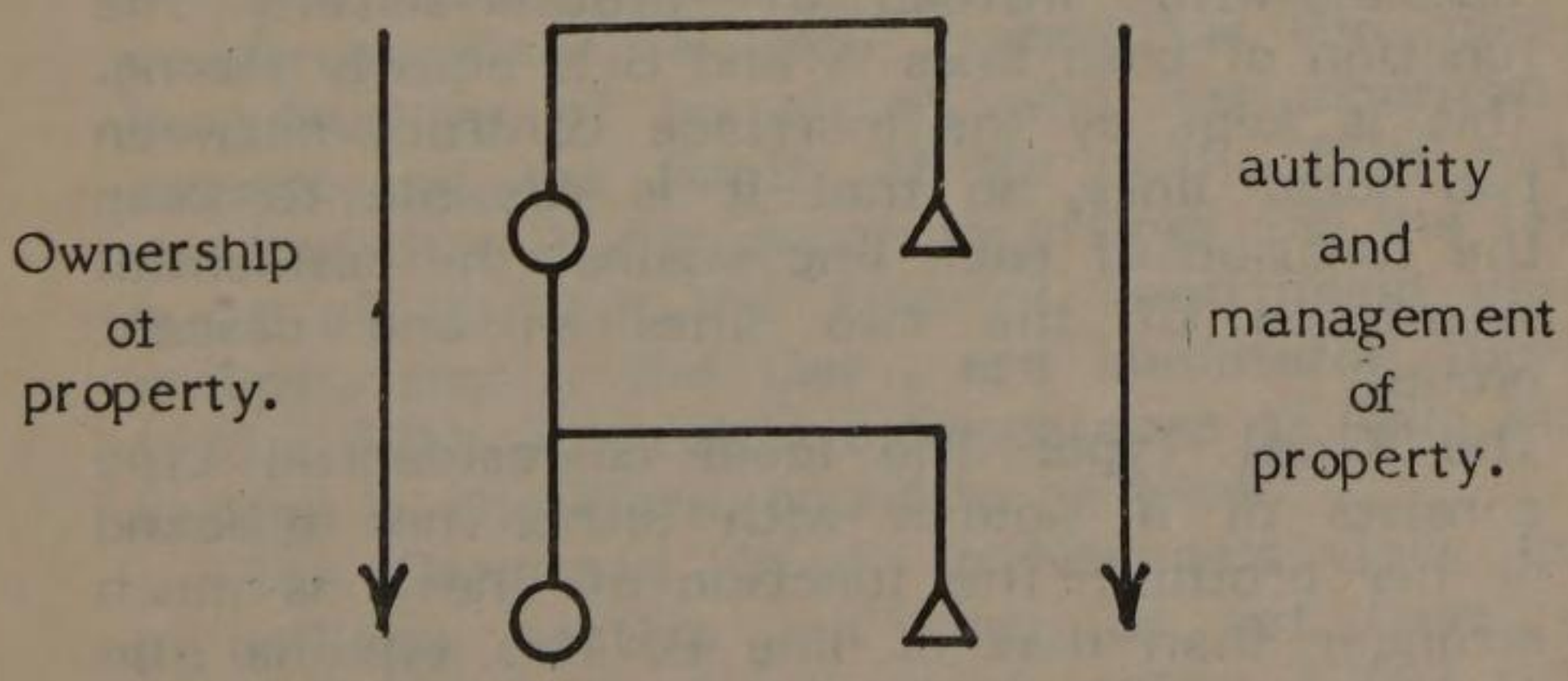
In the major ethnographic studies on matrilineal societies of North-East India such as Nakane's (1967) work on Khasi and Garo; Burling's (1963) work on Garo; and Syamchaudhuri and Das (1973) work on Lalung no specific analysis is provided to the theme of inherent, internal weakness of the unilineal systems. At the same time no ethnographer paid attention to the subject of *cognatic elements* in these societies. The segmentary structure, which is so basic to these societies, is rather unaccepted to these authors as an organisational principle. A remarkable feature of this region is that at different stages of historical development some sections of a 'tribe' are found to have become patrilineal; although in the past they had a strict matrilineal emphasis, such as the Koch of Meghalaya and the Rabha of Assam. The ethnographic material on the whole is uncritical as far as the process of disintegration of corporate structure of matrilineal societies of this region is concerned.

The purpose of the comparative analysis of some prominent features of social organization here is to show how far the descent groups emerge or do not emerge as functionally and structurally viable groups as also to show the different levels of involvement of cognatic elements in matrilineal societies of the Khasi and Garo Hills. Author shall also discuss in brief the politico-jural domain such as juristic dimension of corporateness and succession in support of author's basic argument.

Here we may describe in brief some prominent features of social organization of the Khasi, Garo, Koch and Lalung tribes. The review and re-interpre-

tation presented here is based mainly on the material provided by Nakane (1967), Burling (1963), Syamchaudhuri and Das (1973) and Majumdar (1956, 1967). We shall focus on structure and composition of descent groups, and the various ways in which relatives may be aligned. Function of descent group is examined in relation to residential patterns as well as norms and behaviour at different circumstances. The subject of marriage, postmarital residence and family life is also considered. An attempt is also made at last to test the utility of Gluckman's (1950) concept of Father Right.

Nakane (1967) has shown that the social structure of the Garo and the Khasi differ greatly. Similarity is found only in the basic succession rules of mother-daughter, and mother's brother-sister's son. In fact the property is owned by the woman, but the controlling power and authority over it are in the hands of the man. The main structural differences between the two lies in the composition of a property group: the property group of the Khasi is formed by a descent group at a shallow generation depth, while that of the Garo is maintained by the cooperation of the two local lines, each of which represents a localized lineage group. Hence the Garo descent group tends



to be weakened in its solidarity. In matrilineal systems the ownership of property and the authority over the property group never rest in one person, and the succession to these two offices follows the female line (mother-daughter) and the male line (mother's brother-sister's son) as shown in line A and line B in the following figure, which is reproduced here from Nakane (1967 : 142)

As we shall later discuss in detail this duality of office-holding individuals within the succession rule is the intrinsic cause of complications and variations in matrilineal systems. Among the Garo, for example, the office of *Loskor* appears gradually to have accumulated power, probably at the expense both of the *Nokmas* and of the matrilineal descent groups (Burling, 1963 : 301). Moreover the settlement of disputes among the Garo certainly does not depend on "matrilineal descent groups" (Burling, 1963:298). Thus we see that in politico-jural domain as well as in other contexts the relative importance of matrilineage has considerably declined. The difficulty of preserving in function both lines A and B is caused by residential problems - individual marriages which contradict the sibling cohesion. Different tribes resolve such contradictory factors in alternative ways as follows:

1. **The Garo Type:** The co-residential type is 'husband-wife' instead of 'brother-sister'. The function of both lines A and B is equally strong. This is kept by the marriage contract between two local lines, so that it is possible to keep the function of each line against the residential separation of the two lines in one descent group.
2. **The Khasi Type:** The ideal co-residential type consists of a woman with either her husband or her brother. The function of line A is much stronger than that of line B. This type is also found among the Hopi, the Zuni, the Trukese, the Negri-Sembilan Malay, the Yao, etc. How-

ever, the *Syiem*, the Khasi Chief, does live with his wife after marriage in the residence of his wife.

3. **The Lalung Type:** The ideal pattern is matrilineal inheritance and uxori-local residence. However, among certain clans from which kings (or chiefs) were selected the royal succession did not allow the clan-men to leave the house of birth after marriage (Syamchaudhuri and Das, 1973 : 73). At the same time through the ritual *Kush-singa* the recruitment of a child into patrilineage is possible. Even there are obligatory rituals which permit the woman to move to husband's residence after marriage (Syamchaudhuri and Das, 1973 : 78). Both the line A and line B are thus relatively weak in the Lalung type.

In matrilineal systems, as a rule, the ancestral property is inherited by the matrilineal descent group. The starting point of the difference is really in the ways of inheritance of the *acquired property* particularly by the husband.

In the Khasi type, if a man builds an independent house in which to live with his wife and children, that house and his acquired property during his matrimonial life automatically belong to and are inherited by his wife and children. In Garo society, because of the presence of cross-cousin marriage, a Garo prefers his son marrying the daughter of his sister, who has inherited the property of the family of his birth. Thus perhaps we find that in succession to offices and the settlement of disputes the links of 'matrilineal descent groups', among the Garo, are immaterial (Burling, 1963 : 301). The relative importance of Garo matrilineage is, therefore, bound to be weak.

The Garo and Khasi, in Nakane's view, follow a unilineal system but they do not have what is called 'segmentary lineage' system (1967 : 149). My argument is that when a society has a lineage-

clan-organization it must have some kind of segmentary organization. The lineage, in both the Garo and the Lalung societies, certainly emerges as an exclusive corporate unit, although it is not so obvious among the Khasi. But author believes that both the processes of fission and fusion have been dominant features of all hill tribal societies of North-East India including the tribes such as Khasi, Garo and Lalung. For a discussion on segmentary system among patrilineal people one may refer to Das (1982, 1985).

The processes of segmentation of descent groups into distinct groups as well as spatial movement and grouping of descent groups into phratry-like cluster such as *Mahari* is clearly observable in Lalung society. The Lalungs believe that their clans have descended from twelve sisters (Syamchaudhuri and Das, 1973 : 57). Fusion of clans was mainly caused by wars and feuds in Lalung, Khasi and Syngteng societies. Gait (1963 : 312) observed that from time to time some ambitious chief would conquer and absorb some of the adjoining communities, and the kingdom thus formed would continue to exist until the weakness of his successors gave an opportunity for the prevailing disintegrating tendency to assert itself, when it would again dissolve into a number of small independent communities.

This situation thus demanded an institutionalized arrangement in politico-jural domain to provide stability to several 'independent' social systems. We will take up this point again in the following pages to clarify the argument. Turning to descent group formation, while among the Garo the localized lineage is expressed in terms of the village whose land bears the name of the localizé lineage, among the Khasi on the other hand, the lineage is found only on a household scale . . . within the unit of *iing*. The clan is considered only as a ritual conception implying exogamy (Nakane, 1967: 149), but not as an organized body of kin such as we observed among the Lalung. Among

the Garo the village theoretically consists of the members of the two localized lineages, as represented in the headman and his wife respectively. In Nakane's own interpretation we find a little contradiction in the analysis of Khasi lineage. She observed that in societies of the household lineage type, *i.e.*, the Khasi, a functional unit is demarcated in the first place by common property and residence, which cut off clearly other members who may be included by the descent principle. This demarcation is so clearcut that the wider group, which may be recruited by descent principle, can hardly have a function in itself. The lineage, in the sense of wider descent units, may be vaguely seen . . . (Nakane, 1967 : 157). Again she agrees without any elaborate discussion that the bilateral characteristics of household-lineage type (of Khasi) correspond functionally to the scheme of a bilateral system such as the Maori (Nakane, 1967 : 157). The property group is thus not always composed of a matrilineal descent group, nor has it any institutionalized organization with a matrilineal principle of inheritance, such as we observed among the Garo.

To sum up, the unilineal principle (matrilineal system) works differently in each given society, producing different structures. Descent principle and residence (with landholdings or property) are euqally important criteria for the analysis of social organization. As different degrees and levels of different factors are involved in each given society we, the anthropologists, should not emphasize the prominence of a particular factor.

It is in hill tribal societies of North-East India that certain unique social processes are responsible for drastic social change which need urgent investigation. The change of matrilineal system to patrilineal system, through important economic and cultural changes or through Sanskritization and migration, is one such example. Author shall describe below, in brief, the process of gradual merging

of the matrilineal Koch of Garo hills into the Hinduized patrilineal social structure. (More information on Hinduization of local tribes is to be found elsewhere in this book).

The Koch of the Garo Hills represent a tribe with various degrees of Sanskritization (Majumdar, 1967 : 64). The Koch who are found in the western and south-western borders of the Garo Hills, are permanent cultivators, but they practised shifting cultivation also. According to 1961 Census the speakers of Koch language in Garo Hills is 4,560. The Koch are basically organised on the basis of matrilineal clans, known as *nikini*. Some clans claim a common ancestry and marriage between their members are prohibited (Majumdar, 1967 : 67). The male is regarded as the head of the household and he controls the activities of his wife and children. Divorce is very rare, and so there is no hard and fast rule about the division of the household at the time of divorce.

The interesting feature of Koch social structure is that it represents a stage of transition from the norms of a matrilineally-biased society to that of a patrilineally-biased society. This is due to (1) their attempt to elevate themselves on the social ladder by gradual adoption of Hindu practices, and (2) due to their shift from a *jhum* (slash-and-burn) economy to permanent agriculture (Majumdar, 1967 : 68). The Koch village predominantly consists of a core of related males, the females mostly belonging to other village (Majumdar, 1967:68). Cases of grown-up male children staying with their parents after marriage are very common. Such sons are given share of the property also (Majumdar, 1967 : 68). As regards kinship terminology we find that mother's brother's children are termed siblings and behaved as such. In Koch kinship terminology the only term showing affinity with Garo kinship terminology and divergence from Indo-Aryan kinship terminology is the term for sister's children (female speaking),

which is the same term she uses for her own children (Majumdar, 1967 : 69).

As regards the stratification within the tribe we find that the Chapra section of Koch utilize the services of the Brahman priest and they consider themselves superior to other sections of Koch tribe. The Wanang section of Koch do not employ Brahman priest and they preserve a number of their own spirits. It is, therefore, that the Wanang Koch are considered to be most inferior (Majumdar, 1967 : 70). Thus the Koch draw a sharp line of division between their own sections and between themselves and neighbouring non-Hindus such as the 'beef-eating' Garo.

Let me now take up the case of the matrilineal Lalung tribe of whom very little is known to us. Author shall, therefore, start with a historical background of the people and their territory. The Lalungs, now-a-days, are mainly found in Assam but a section of these people live in Khasi and Jaintia Hills of Meghalaya. In Khasi and Jaintia Hills their census figures were recorded in 1891 and 1951 as 1505 and 298 respectively. The Lalung territory has a intermediate position between the patrilineal Kachari of the plains and the matrilineal Khasi of the hills. Grierson (1903 : 49) believed that the Lalungs are the autochthones of the Jaintia hills. Historical evidence of 'independent Lalung states' are not many. Dimorua, a Lalung state in the southwest of Nowgong was 'independent' till the 15th century. Later this and several other Lalung states were brought under the Ahom or the Jaintia kingdoms. In 1835 the British marched to the Jaintia state and forced its king to surrender. In the same year the Lalung state of Gova was also annexed by the British. Local administration was, however, not taken over by the British and no revenue was demanded. Petty cases were allowed to be decided by the Lalung chiefs known as Dolois.

The Lalung clans, which are said to be descend-

ed from twelve sisters, to author, appear as based on a "segmentary system". A phratry-like unit, *mahari*, consisting of a number of individual clans, *Khul*, exists in the society, although Syamchaudhuri and Das (1973 : 57) have avoided the use of the term phratry. There are as many as thirty-one individual clans traced by these authors. One clan in each cluster is regarded as the dominant one. Formation of multi-clan *mahari* is effected in two ways (Syamchaudhuri and Das, 1973 : 60): the usual process is the splitting of a clan as it grew in size, and the other factor was the forcible induction and integration of new groups into a numerically dominant and powerful clan. We find that the number of clans in a cluster ranges from two to four. In Nambor village there are thirteen clans but only eight of them are grouped into four clusters. We are told that in this village there is no social hierarchy in the status of a clan of any cluster nor between the clusters themselves (Syamchaudhuri and Das, 1973 : 62), and thus we see that these authors contradict their own earlier statement about the undefined dominance of one clan in the *mahari* unit. In each *mahari* of Nambor village one clan is found to have descended from one of the twelve ancestresses, while the remaining clans are descended from a female sibling in the generation next to one original ancestress. The *mahari* solidarity is expressed in the belief that different clans in a *mahari* have descended from different female colaterals of the same womb (Syamchaudhuri and Das, 1973 : 64).

The Garo also have a *Lalung-mahari* type unit but with a little difference. Even the same term *mahari* is used among the Garo. Several Gamo *maharis* constitute an unit called *machong* but structurally each *mahari* here is an unit within a *machong*, which is a wider territorial unit. Thus the descent and territorial principles are combined in Garo society through *machong* which refers to the *maharis* who live together in one territory.

In the past the Lalung tribe came into war-fare with a number of contending powers, namely, the Dimasa Kachari, Jaintia, Koch and the Ahom. It is quite possible that during these wars the original alliances of several clans had to be shifted leading to a change in the old formation. Unlike the Lalung the Khasi were less affected from alien intervention in the past. Probably due to these circumstances the Khasi did not require to form multi-clan units headed by a dominant clan, such as we observed among the Lalung. The territorial basis of the clans in Khasi society is thus better-defined. Comparatively the Garo *mahari* emerges as a more rigidly defined unit, both structurally and territorially. As all *maharis* share the same *machong* territory all kinsmen of a village live together. The Garo *mahari* which consists of kins of three generations, is, therefore, comparable to the smallest division of Lalung *mahari* and the *shi-ing* of the Khasis. Despite migrations to distant places, the Garo belonging to the same *machong* are regarded as close relations, though they may be living hundreds of miles away (Majumdar, 1956 : 15).

The economic system of the Lalung village is based on the interdependence between the households and the dormitory boys. When a Lalung marries he does not want to leave the economic environment with which he is familiar (Syamchaudhuri and Das, 1973 : 72). As regards postmarital residence we see that among certain Lalung clans from which chiefs were selected the clan members did not leave the house of birth after marriage. Because of warfare in the past a large number of Lalung clans lost their integration and thus they were re-organised by some influential members of some old dominant clans. This group of dominant clansmen bring their wives to their own villages (Syamchaudhuri and Das, 1973 : 74). There are thus enough evidences to show the inherent weakness of Lalung system.

An immediate or classificatory mother's brother, *borjela*, plays an important role in the marriage ceremony. When a man goes to live with his wife after marriage, it does not mean that he severs of all social relations with his parents. His first-born child is accepted and recruited into his natal house. Of course this social obligation can be redeemed by performing a ritual called *Kushsinga* (Syamchaudhuri and Das, 1973 : 77). In the same way when a woman takes her residence in the house of her husband, she is also required to sever her membership from the clan of her birth, by performing *Kushsinga*. If this ritual is delayed the woman's first-born child is taken by woman's parents to their house. This recruitment process is known as *jontana*, which means, one who has been pulled in (Syamchaudhuri and Das, 1973 : 78). Thus we find that the Lalung do not necessarily loose a member by way of marriage and, on the other hand, by way of compensation through *jontana* they retain the particular matrilineal/patrilineal identity of a group. Moreover the position of *borjela* is interesting for our analysis. The *borjela* among Lalung is not a relationship term. It signifies a particular structural position of the first-born male of a family unit, which has descended from the original ancestress of a clan. In the context of consanguine relationship he is distinguished by the term *Khai* and in relationship with the children of his brothers and sisters he is *nomai*. Conversely, the siblings in the lower generations are *pagin* to him (Syamchaudhuri and Das, 1973 : 83). The structural position of the *clan-borjela* is different from the *family-borjela*. The *clan-borjela* as the senior male colateral represents male lineality of matriclan. In the structuring of matrilineal consanguinity the Lalung stand between the Khasi and the Garo.

The Khasi and Lalung do not approve cross-cousin marriage, while the Garo prefer it. A Garo prefers his son marrying the daughter of his sister,

who has inherited the property of the family of his birth (*cf.* Syamchaudhuri and Das, 1973 : 89). Thus among the Garo the idea of consanguine solidarity of the sibling born of the same womb is not present, but there is a certain kind of structural solidarity built upon the basis of a dual control over the immovable economic possessions between the siblings of the opposite sexes. Thus the difference in the extension of the degree of consanguinity through male element in these three societies also confirms the weaknesses of the systems.

A Garo always maintains a strong interest in the property of the family of his birth as his son marries his sister's daughter. Thus the male lineality is here supported by control of property also. This also presents a threat to matrilineal kin solidarity. Likewise, as we have earlier noted, the lineal emphasis of consanguinity in the male line is stronger in Lalung society than in the Khasi society. Perhaps due to this kind of in-built structuring that the Lalungs of the plains now show drastic change in the pattern of residence after marriage (Syamchaudhuri and Das, 1973 : 96).

Matriliny : Myth or Reality

Let author now examines and tests the analytic utility of Gluckman's (1950) concept of 'Father Right'. Father Right as such is not necessarily associated with patrilineal descent. In Garo society, for example, authority within the co-resident extended family *(nok)* is vested in the senior husband in the group, the *Nokma*. It is he who exercises control over his wife's property and disposes of his daughters in marriage. A man has only marginal influence in the affairs of the households of his married sisters. The Garo thus seem to be a Father Right society. In the same way we observed that the Koch are also a Father Right society. Leach (1961 : 115) observes that Gluckman,

who formulated the hypothesis of Father Right, in his argument presupposes that the descent structure of any particular society can be given a position on a continuous scale, the markers of which might read: Marked Father Right-Moderate Father Right -- Bilateral (cognatic) -- Moderate Matriliny -- Extreme Matriliny. The general thesis seems to be that as we move along this scale from Marked Father Right towards Extreme Matriliny the probability of frequent and easy divorce increases, while the probability of quantitatively large bridewealth payments decreases, the causal factor being the type of descent structure. Although author has not taken into consideration the subjects of divorce and bridewealth among these people, author's little and inadequate information on these people does support the contention of Leach. However, author believes that he has otherwise provided ample data to show the relative position of each of four matrilineal societies on the proposed scale from Father Right towards Extreme Matriliny. Divorce which is found to be rare among the Koch must have been a result of their shift to the patrilineal norms and behaviour. The Koch, in the above scale, thus belong to the position of the Marked Father Right and the Khasi belong to the position of the Extreme Matriliny (*cf.* N.K. Das, 1982c, 1985b).

Fortes (1969 : 280) accepts that in defining descent by contrast with filiation, rather than in abstract, externally descriptive terms or by reference to some intangible quality such as "lineality", we may define it by reference to a feature of internal structural differentiation and opposition that makes "unilineal descent" only a variety of the general category. He also stated that whereas filiation is the relation that exists between a person and his parents only, descent refers to a relation mediated by a parent between himself and an ancestor, defined as any genealogical predecessor of the grandparental or earlier generation (1959 : 207). We may emphasize the importance

of a "pedigree" as 'the charter of its' bearer's descent' for some social purposes, in particular societies, take a "unilineal form" but might elsewhere, or for other social purposes, be constructed by the social combination of mixed forms of filiation. Descent, in this context, serves as an actor-centred instrument for assignment of rights and status or for establishing interpersonal or intergroup connections, and can vary from actor to actor in a "group" constituted by other criteria (such as co-residence) as in the Hapu (Fortes, 1969 : 281). The statement that an Ashanti lineage constitutes a "descent group" implies the precise information that these groups are made up of persons whose genealogical relations with one another are exclusively and exhaustively specifiable both by any member and by an informed outsider. The critical features of politico-jural alignment and a number of rights and duties can be deductively predicted for the actor. The lineage membership, in a system of unilineal descent groups, regulates only a part of a person's nexus of statuses, defines only a selection of his rights, duties, and capacities and endangers only one sector of his total social identity. Yet we still find anthropologists who think of unilineal descent as a device for neatly sorting all the members of a society into discrete "groups". Thus misled, they are apt to fall into the trap of thinking of "cognatic groups" as sorted by contrast into "overlapping" compartments, difficult as it is to imagine such an arrangement. The fault lies again in the analytical ambiguity due to failure to distinguish internal structure from external context and to the fallacy of interpreting genealogically phrased relations as classifications of individuals, not as designations of status.

To be sure, in lineage based polities, lineage membership forms the indispensable foundation for a person's social existence; but there are components of personhood and areas of social action that are independent of lineage regulation. In

these contexts of social relations and normative rules, there is ample scope for freedom of choice, as in patrilaterally ordered relations and activities among the matrilineal Ashanti, and in matrilateral and local contexts among patrilineal people like the Tallensi. There are even possibilities of choice within the limits of unilineal and other descent group constraints, as studies in the developmental cycle of domestic and family groups have shown (*cf.* Goody, 1958; Gray and Gulliver, 1964). The principle involved is stated by Leach in these words: "In all viable systems there must be an area where the *individual is free to make choices so as to manipulate the system to his own advantage*" (Leach's emphasis, 1962 : 133).

We touch another undecided issue when we attribute the forms of kinship and descent institutions found in a particular society to the influence of exogenous parameters such as the ecological or the demographic or the technological conditions and demands to which the society must adapt. However, new research among peoples with "bilateral" kinship systems has shown how doubtful is the validity of the above generalizations. I.M. Lewis' comparative analysis (1965) of six well-known patrilineal systems brings this out cogently. On reading the ethnographic works, both old and new, on the tribes of North-East India we find that it is not only the particular ecological conditions which are prerequisite for formation of large and successively segmented clans (and lineages) but other factors such as pre-existing cultural values and the political pressure of external groups also affected this process.

The people such as Khasi, Garo, Lalung etc., may think, act, and believe in terms of "dogmas" of matriliny, and that is what the ethnographers of these people have shown. What these ethnographers have not critically examined is the juristic dimension of corporateness. The juristic model is derived from Maine's as well as Weber's formula-

tions. Whereas Weber's analysis is concerned with modern, capitalistic, and industrial forms of corporate organization as his primary data; Maine's analysis deals with institutions and norms that closely resemble those of contemporary tribal societies. There is also the functionalist model, which fits with Radcliffe-Brown's 1950 position. The fourth model is related to the property theory (Fortes, 1969 : 295). Author understands that each model is relevant for the type of analysis we are making here. However, author shall discuss, in brief, relation of some models with his data. Distinguishing between unilineal systems with complementary descent groups and "full double descent systems" Goody takes the "division of property" as "the fundamental feature around which other differences . . . revolve" (1961 : II).

Among several studies that bear directly on the property theory the most important is Goodenough's analysis of the Trukese lineage and property system (1951). The Trukese conceive of a property holding group as composed fundamentally of siblings (1951 : 30-31). In short, the corporation in Truk is an organized kin group of a martrilineage whose core and prototype is a group of own siblings. The corporate property of the lineage is administered by its most senior male member as its head.

Author thinks that the picture is not dissimilar to our Garo-Khasi-Lalung pattern. There are analogies, also, in the political level of the "district". The presence of "male heads" and its perpetuation explains the utility of the principle of "complementary filiation" in politico-jural context. We must see how far does it counterbalance the intrinsic separatism of the component descent groups. We must also see how far the matrilineages among these tribes as corporations are an important unit of politico-jural structure. Author personally believes that lineage or clan among people such as Garo, Khasi and Lalung is constituted by the perpetuation by matrilineal descent of the cross-sib-

ling bond; and this is a politico-jural principle, not a function of property relations. The notion of a descent group as constituting "one person" takes many forms. The group is one by physical perpetuation and moral identity (Fortes, 1969 : 304). Thus we discover that sibling group is commonly regarded as the nuclear, "one person" corporation. For siblings are both a plurality in themselves and by co-filiation an unity. Siblings are equal to one another in jural status (Fortes, 1969 : 304) and thus the sibling group is he perfect model (*cf.* Fortes, 1945 : 32).

Succession is of key importance in corporate group structure as well as in the continuity of corporation's sole in our case. In fact, it is the ambit of the authority, both politico-jural, vested in the office of the chief and priest (such as *Syiem* and *Lyngdoh* in Khasi system) that constitutes the boundary of their corporateness. The best evidence for this is the fact that in external relations with other units of the same kind, or with superior political authorities, citizens of these communities can only act in their capacity as citizens (not in private capacities) through their chief. But it is also important at the same time, particularly talking of Khasi or Lalung chiefs, to lay emphasis on the specification of the rights and duties and responsibilities, for behind each corporator in a corporate group there is still an individual, man or woman; behind the king or the priest there is still mortal man or woman bound by ties of relationship and loyalty of a personal kind that can at times conflict with the politico-jural and related statuses that pertain to him as a corporator in a particular aggregate, or as holder of an office. In the available ethnographic works on matrilineal tribes of this region no such contradictions are reported. This is because no ethnographer is concerned with distinguishing consistently between social relations and structural configurations, on the one side, and the innumerable

and protean contexts of action, belief, and practice, as well as the natural environment, in which they become manifest.

Fortes (1969 : 309) has demonstrated that the social structure of every society has two basic and irreducible dimensions, or more concretely, that it comprises two basic orders of social relations, institutions, and norms. Familial domain and politico-jural domain, kinship and polity, moral order and legal order are alternative ways of designating this dichotomy of structural features, depending on which aspect one wishes to emphasize. The important point, however, is that these two orders of relations, institutions, and norms are, as author has tried to show, analytically distinguishable in every society, although they may be so fused together in the actualities of conduct and behaviour as to be superficially indistinguishable. Fortes has thus rightly stressed the complementary association of kinship and polity in social structure (1969 : 309). He believes that the elementary components of patrifiliation, and matrifiliation, and hence of agnatic, enatic, and cognatic modes of reckoning kinship are, like genes in the individual organism, invariably present in all familial systems (1969 : 309). The institutional patterns that emerge in Khasi, Garo and Lalung systems can be understood as resulting from or reflecting the balance of inter-dependence and integration, on the one hand, and of divergence and segregation, on the other, arrived at in the tasks assigned to each of these elements. Shifts of structural balance may be shown to be consistent with shifts in patterns of government or economic organization, or world-view and to fit the developmental cycle of the family. But as to what lies behind variations can only be understood by conducting prolonged and careful investigation.

Discussion on Patrilineal System

After having described the involvement of cognatic

elements in some matrilineal societies we shall now take up the example of the patrilineal southern Angamis, who are also called as "Zounuo-Keyhonuo". During 1977 and 1982 this author studied the Zounuo-Keyhonuo people in Viswema village for a total period of six months. The brief discussion that follows is based on data collected from this village.

In Zounuo-Keyhonuo society the descent remains the most important principle of grouping in politico-jural matters as well as the source of rights and liabilities of the individuals. The analysis of the smallest social groupings such as the family units, within the wider descent groups, reveals their more important status and roles in the context of jural and political claims. Reliance on agnation as an organizing principle enables individuals and groups, and the titles they possess, to be systematically combined or divided at various structural levels with an almost mechanical ease and regularity.

The actors, or the individuals are thus within the purview of law of the lineage. Lineages are placed within the jural framework of clanship. While most disputes between the members of the same lineage are settled by the *sarra-pithi* (the lineage elder), disputes over property, etc., amongst the local hierarchy of social groups can frequently be settled without prolonged disruption of social relationships. Whenever two component units are in dispute the degree of their agnatic relationship automatically defines the superordinate group that should exercise its residual rights to the property in question by intervening to halt the quarrel. These patterns and consequences of a thorough-going employment of agnatic principles are of great functional value.

In Zounuo-Keyhonuo society the elaboration of the descent group structures provides a scaffolding for organizing the relationships of territorially divided segments. A single genealogical chart encompasses the whole population of the 'tribe'

and the villages are the products of a segmentary process going on over generations. Patrilineality receives recognition but then this is not mainly to defend the tribal interest based on a fixed territory. Although members distinguish in various ways between agnates and non-agnates and relate the distinction in some form or other to enduring social groups, descent groups are not necessarily everywhere organized patrilineally. Not only that cognates are permanently recruited to form "group-members", non-Zounuo-Keyhonuo, non-Naga persons could also be absorbed easily into social groups, without experiencing any economic disadvantage.

The fact that a woman inherits property shows that patrilineality is not the only organizing principle, and that only on the basis of the land ownership and utilization pattern that no strict classification could be offered. Although cognatic elements are inherent in patri-social groups of these Naga people but the 'complementary filiation' is not the only decisive factor, though, (agnatic) siblingship and (matri)-filiation serve equally to recruit the local groups. Different modes of inheritance and succession reveal very clearly the intrusion of jural regulation into the domain of family and kinship relations. These facts also reveal that the structural and functional status of women in politico-jural context is equally great.

The transfer of rights of a woman at the event of marriage is never absolute or permanent in true jural and economic sense among the Zounuo-Keyhonuo. Important aspects of her ritual, economic and jural rights remain permanently vested in her patrilineal group. Although a woman is drawn closer and closer to her husband's lineage over time, she can never become a member of that lineage. Not only that she always retains definite property rights in her patrilineage and her natal home, at the annual clan festivals she also takes part along with her children as representative of her patri-lineage.

The issue of married woman's jural rights and agnatic status may be discussed in the context of dissolution of elementary family through death and divorce.

The break-up of an elementary family through death or divorce has important consequences in relation to descent groups, for such an event may re-define the position of the offspring of the marriage in regard to those groups. If a woman dies, her unweaned child is taken by her mother or close uterine kinswoman, who looks after it until strong enough to return to the father's house. A widow may either continue to live in the husband's house or she may be allowed to re-marry preferably outside the husband's lineage without any ritual and bridewealth transactions. The death of a father in majority of cases results in a child being raised among other than agnatic kin; this death generally leads to a redefinition of lineage affiliation of the offspring. Such offsprings generally reside in the compound of their mother's agnates, where, by the time they become adults they are recruited permanently as "cognates"; such congnates acquire full jural status in their adopted matrilineage.

At divorce a woman returns to her father's home until she finds another husband. If she leaves her husband of her own accord all her 'gift-property' including land jurally become the property of her husband. In most such cases the children, particularly the grown-up ones, remain with the husband. Residence of such children in their father's compound is necessary to acquire the full jural status of a patrilineage member, which is a crucial aspect of the social structure.

The Zounuo-Keyhonuo Pattern of the Dual Inheritance

A woman's position in the total jural context of the society may be viewed by discussing the

pozuopu land transaction. A *pozuopu* land is essentially a matrilineally inherited property which is transmitted only in the female line, *i.e.*, from mother to daughter and daughter to grand-daughter, on their marriages. The case of Kezevinu, sister of this author's interpreter Shri Pukron, may be cited here. Kezevinu married in Zherima *thenu* (clan) of Viswema village. Her husband works in Kohima so she permanently stays in Kohima. When she left for Kohima she gave her *pozuopu* land (the terraced field) 'for use only' to Daniel (elder brother son). Daniel worked that land for sometime and then he gave it to Vizeho (Father Brother Son). Kezevinu could not sell her *pozuopu* land because that land is customarily to be given to Kezevinu's daughter at marriage, following the principle of matrilineal inheritance.

At marriage a woman not only brings her *pozuopu* land but also a lot of other articles such as cattle (cow and pig), ornaments, clothes and paddy. All these articles are called as *tenumishiephro*. *Pozuopu* land are not evenly distributed among the daughters, eldest daughter being entitled for a larger share of land. The daughters are generally also given a part of father's own (agnatically inherited) land. Such land is called as *tepumi-kitsa*. If a couple dies without a child and no child is adopted by them then the land inherited from paternal (agnatic) line goes back to the corporate patrilineage *Kayie* estate, and the *pozuopu* land goes back to the affinal kins *(omuni)*. In such case the daughter may be asked to live in her parental house, even after her marriage. It is, therefore, we find that among the Zounuo-Keyhonuo a complex system of dual inheritance system prevails whereby women are placed in a highly advantageous position, particularly in terms of jural rights.

Recruitment of Cognates into the Agnatic Core

In Zounuo-Keyhonuo society the *matrifilisation*

provides an alternative framework for recruitment of cognates with full economic and jural status. This dual patterns of filiation in Zounuo-Keyhonuo society gives rise to the bilateral extension of kinship ties, but, in fact, the two lines of unilineal descent are not recognized equally to very great extent. The Zounuo-Keyhonuo live at the point at which the inheritance follows the patrilineal and matrilineal principles and lines. But still unilineality is emphasized in male line only and ultimately it is between male agnates that the holder-heir situation falls. A man has only residual claims on the property of his mother's brother and ideally the relationship of the mother's brother and sister's son derives from the fact that the individuals concerned are the members of different property holding groups.

Thus from ego's point of view there are two aspects:

(i) his relationship with the members of his mother's descent group, and
(ii) his relationship with the offspring of his "sisters".

Ego's roles as sister's son *(otso)* or as mother's brother *(omuni)* are distinctly defined in Zounuo-Keyhonuo society. What is important to be noted is that these terms are widely applied to all lineage *(sarra)* members and indeed these are used without distinction of sex. While discussing these relationships it is necessary to do so in the context of the "descent" groups to which the individuals belong. Kinship relations are viewed by the people in terms of descent groups; the limits for the application of a particular kinship term are the boundaries of the descent group. The terms *otso* and *omuni* are thus lineage based terms applied both to the individuals as well as to the whole lineage or *sarra* groups.

To ego, the whole of his mother's patrilineage

emerges as his "mother's brother", generation differences being of less relevance outside the mother's natal homestead. In a *segmentary system* such as this, a true exogamous group has to be recognized (bride giving/receiving group) to determine the jural status of individuals. This is particularly because the marriage involves not only the exchange of the women but also transfer of the land. Significance of both the woman and land are sharply recognized in customary laws related to them. There are many lineages in Viswema who have incorporated 'cognates'; such cognates now enjoy *total jural status* of a lineage member, with claims on their mother's agnatic corporate *kayie* estate. Such rights as we stated earlier are granted by virtue of the residual claim which women possess on the property of their patrilineage.

Right from his early years through regular contacts, such as through his mother's visits to her natal home, a person knows fairly well most of the members of his mother's patrilineage. Mother's natal home remains an alternative home for him should he run into difficulties with his own agnates, or should his parents' marriage end by death or divorce. In the past warfare also caused complete death of whole lineages; one or two surviving individuals from such unfortunate lineages taking refuge in maternal descent groups.

The descent principle is thus invariably counterbalanced by the principle of complementary filiation. This is further revealed in the fact that a person's passage through life cannot be managed in customarily proper ways without the collaboration of his kinsfolk on both sides. This is indeed a strong binding force. We find that in every significant matter such as birth of a child, a marriage, a feast, or a death, patrikin and matrikin are both distinguished and equally involved. Mother's brother (own and classificatory) and even mother's, mother's brother, alongwith one's agnates, are co-responsible and have complimentary rights

and duties in several jural and ritual contexts. At the occasion of feast giving ceremony *(Zhotho)*, 'gifts' are received by a man from several groups of close kin of "patriline", "matriline" as well as his wife's "patriline".

Fortes had originally defined filiation as "the relationship created by the fact of being the legitimate child of one's parents" (1949 : 233-34). Originally Fortes contrasted filiation with descent in the context of a review of the theory of *unilineal* descent group structure. He was interested in the function of "complementary filiation" -- that is to say, filiation with the parent who does not transmit membership of the unilineal descent group -- "as the primary mechanism of segmentation within the group" (1969 : 253-54). Fortes defined descent as "fundamentally a jural concept . . . (representing) the connecting link between the external, that is political and legal aspect of . . . unilineal descent groups, and the internal or domestic aspect" (1953: 30; 1969 : 254). Thus viewed, descent could be regarded as a principle and mechanism of social structure operative in the extra-familial domain of political and jural institutions, whereas filiation and complementary filiation could be regarded as the two components of a mechanism operative primarily within the familial and kinship domain. But at the same time, since cognates could be premanently recruited through 'matrifiliation' into the mother's lineage we find that the full jural capacity of a person could also be maintained without consideration of descent or descent group unilineality, particularly among this Naga group of people.*

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* For detailed discussion on this subject; see: Das, N.K., "The Politico-Jural Aspects of the Segmentary Social System of the Zounuo-Keyhonuo Naga (the southern Angamis)". Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, 1985. Gauhati University, Gauhati (Assam).

FOUR

TRIBAL POLITY AND STATE FORMATION

Political Anthropology and Study of Political Systems

POLITICAL anthropology is concerned with the description and analysis of the political systems, their structures, processes and representations. Political anthropology is a fast developing approach within anthropology today. Many scholars such as M. Gluckman generally agree that political anthropologywas virtually founded when the collective work titled *African Political Systems* appeared in 1940 (Balandier, 1972 : 186). This book has acquired great value as a *comparative study* of state and non-state political systems offering the outline of a typology. This book has provided scientific status to political anthropology though some of the views contained in this book met with a good deal of disagreement. The editors of this book, E.E. Evans-Pritchard and Meyer Fortes, broughtout their individual works mainly dealing with political theme such as Evans-Pritchard 1940 (The Nuer), 1940 (The Anuak); Fortes 1945 (The Tallensi), 1949 (The Tallensi). These studies revealed that these political systems are essentially based on "descent groups" and the kinship and marriage ties that link them. Through the above works developed the model of segmentary/acephalous lineage system.

Since 1945 there has been a rapid increase in the number of specialists in political anthropology.

These specialists have studied and examined both "state societies" (see Nadel, 1942, 1961; Smith, 1956, 1960; Maquet 1961, 1964; Apter, 1961, 1965; Beattie 1959a, 1959b, 1960a, 1960b, 1964), and "segmentary non-state societies" (Middleton and Tait, 1958, Southall 1956, Balandier 1965). These scholars have provided regional synthesis based on related systems. The book *Tribes Without Rulers* (Middleton and Tait, 1958) deals with lineage based non-state societies. It improves upon the typology provided by Fortes and Evans-Pritchard. Lucy Mair's *Primitive Government* (1962) distinguishes between three types of government: minimal government, diffused government, and state government. Schapera's *Government and Politics in Tribal Societies* (1956) is based on examples from Southern Africa. Leach's *Political Systems of Highland Burma* (1954) is devoted to the political structures of the Kachin. More recent studies have been affected by post-colonial situations. They form a link between political anthropology and political science (Apter 1965, Coleman and Ziegler), and show the necessity for inter-disciplinary cooperation.

It is argued that the British social anthropology in the period of its strength and glory, 1920-60, overemphasized the 'organic unity of traditional societies'. Gluckman, influenced by Marxist ideas, chose to emphasize 'conflict'. Gluckman's student, Worsley (1956) made a re-analysis of Tallensi society and criticized Fortes for stressing kinship and ignoring the economic interests which he sees as lying behind talk of kinship. In his essay on modern Zululand, Gluckman (1940) spoke of exploitation of natives. The theme was to be developed more fully by P. Worsley in a study of New Guinean millenarian religious movements, *The Trumpet Shall Sound* (1957). This work was clearly influenced by Marxist ideas. Worsley's study heralded a growing number of works on the part of anthropologists which considered the colonial situation and its significance in terms influenced by

Marxist ideas (Bloch, 1983 : 145). The collected essays edited by British anthropologist T. Asad under the title *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter* illustrated this trend and contained severe criticisms of earlier anthropologists for their attitude to colonialism (Asad, 1973).

With the help of examples of state systems (Ahom, Kachari, Jaintia, Khasi, Tripuri, Karbi) and non-state systems (Zounuo-Keyhonuo-Naga, Ao Naga) we shall review below the relevance of African models and other conceptual frameworks in studying North East situation. Analysis of mode of law enforcement and dispute settlement among the segmentary/acephalous Zounuo-Keyhonuo Naga helps us to critically understand the system of non-state polity organized through kinship/descent systems.

Political Systems of North East India

Political system is the means through which a society maintains social order and reduces social disorder. Anthropologists generally identify four basic kinds of political systems. In order of their structural complexity these are bands, tribes, chiefdoms and states. The bands and tribes are generally "uncentralized" socio-political systems; the chiefdoms and states are "centralized" systems. While studying the 'state-like-organization' and 'non-state-like-organization' this author discovered that there are a large number of features which are commonly shared by people in both these systems. In case of both these systems the kinship-bonds, territorial foundation, ethnic boundary, headman or big-man and village council of elders, ("military organization", "head-hunting" and "war-fare" in pre-British period), management of law and justice and property relations are all analytical-ly tied together. Territory and kinship (such as clan organization) are two most important features of the political systems. In many cases although

application of a rigid definition of 'state' may not be proper, but to describe certain social formations such as khasi syiemship, and 'Kingdoms' of Ahoms, Kacharis, etc., one could use the word "state" in contrast to many "non-state" systems.

The state is the most formal of political organisations. Inherent in the concept of the state is the idea of true, permanent government, public and sovereign by which the state can use legitimized force to regulate the affairs as its citizens as well as its relations with other states. Police, foreign ministers, war ministers, and other branches of the government function to control and punish such disruptive acts as crime, terror, and rebellion. Typically, state society is divided into social classes, and economic functions and wealth are distributed unequally. A market economy is an integral part of the state, as are vast surpluses of goods and services and the intense specialization of labour (Krader, 1968).

In the simplest terms every state may be viewed as an organization comprising these three main components (Claessen and Skalmik 1978:17): "a number of people, a certain delimited territory, and a specific type of government". These characteristics also apply to stateless societies (*cf.* Mair, 1962). It is very difficult, however, to fix a definite number of people to form a state. Birdsell (1973 : 337) has demonstrated that "as soon as a group of people exceeds the number of 500, a government based on face to face relations only will no longer be possible, and some form of organization will become necessary unless fission takes place. The "concept of territory in early states is rather vague" (Claessen and Skalmik, 1978 : 18). About the *government* of the 'state' Nadel says that it has to be centralized, maintaining law and order, and excluding independent action by its citizens (Nadel, 1942:69 : Krader, 1968: Claessen, 1970). There seems to be no objection to the view that one of the characteristics of the state is the exist-

ence of classes (Claessen and Skalmik, 1978 : 20).

It is because of the difficulty of the scholars in drawing the dividing-line between the state and the non-state that the term "Early-state" is now exceedingly being used (Claessen and Skalmik, 1978). Adams (1975) has stressed the possibility of development towards the state from the chiefdom level, as well as the reverse process of development from the state to the chiefdom. At this stage we may re-state the definition of chiefdom. Taking Service's definition (1975 : 16) it may be formulated as follows:

> "Chiefdoms are socio-political organizations with a centralized government, hereditary hierarchical status arrangements with an aristocratic ethos but no formal, legal apparatus of forceful repression, and without the capacity to prevent fission. These organizations seem to be universally theocratic, with submission to authority taking the form of that of a religious congregation to a chief priest."

The "chiefdom" is far more highly developed than the simpler types of political organization led by 'big men', or comparable leaders (Claessen and Skalmik, 1978 : 22).

It appears that quite a few of the tribal state-systems of North-east would belong to the category of "the typical early state", and the structural re-analysis of the 'Kachari state system' included in the volume, *The Early State* (Claessen and Skalmik, 1978) also described the Kachari state as the *typical early state.* Early state is a formation "in which ties of kinship were counterbalanced by those of locality, where competition and appointment counterbalanced the principles of heredity, where non-kin officials and title-holders played a leading role in government administration, and where redistribution and reciprocity dominated the relations between the social strata" (Claessen

and Skalmik, 1978 : 589). In her work on early state system of the Bodo-Kachari, Sofia Maretina (1978) has summarized the basic points of her conclusions in this way:

1. The slow rate and, due to the short period of the existence of state-like unions of this type (Kachari/Koch states), the *incompleteness of the process of class formation* in early states. Hence the pre-class (or early class) character of these states.
2. The basic preservation of traces of the clan structure in the hierarchy of the social strata.
3. The importance of the role played by war in the stabilization of states and in the strengthening of the dominant position of privileged social strata.
4. The indispensability of contacts with advanced state systems to provide the required attributes of a state-structure.
5. The greater role played by the ecological factor than in the case of more advanced stages of development, as reflected in the *difference in evolution between the hill areas and the plains.*
6. The *transfer to the plains* as an indispensable *factor in the formation of the early state".*

With these facts in mind we may now describe the general ethno-historical situations under which the early Kachari state developed.

The Kachari State Formation

The Kacharis are said to be a Tibeto-Burmese people, belonging to the Bodo ethnic group. Of the several dozen of ethnic groups, the Bodo were the only people with state-like unions. Besides the Kacharis a number of other groups of Bodo origin may be mentioned. The Chutiya, for example,

dominated a number of areas of East Assam during 13th-15th centuries. The Koch created a prospering state and were once the main rivals of the Kacharis on the political scene, and the Tipperah, who succeeded . the latter were the dominant power in Lower and Middle Assam (*Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, 1909: 754-755). All these peoples during 13th to 17th centuries, according to Maretina (1978 : 340), "had primitive state-like formations that replaced the former Hindu dynasties of the Guptas and Palas, the evidence of which is very scanty. These formations covered one or another part of Assam (in both the hills and plains) for longer or shorter periods, and like all of this type, were fairly unstable (they emerged swiftly and, even more rapidly, disintegrated), hence the extreme instability of political frontiers in mediaeval Assam". The Kachari state existed under conditions of incessant warfare, which led to frequent changes of habitation area. From the fifteenth century on, the gradual ascendancy of the Ahoms, who ousted the Kacharis from their fertile river valleys and by the middle of the sixteenth century had forced the Kacharis to retreat southwards to Maibong, situated in the North Cachar Hills, can be observed. Independent local tribes, *i.e.*, the Nagas and the Kukis, became subjected to the Raja, taxes in whose favour were levied upon their households. As a result of numerous changes of habitation area due to their pursuit by the Ahoms, the Kacharis split up into a number of separate groups, which later on came to be considered as independent tribes. After their conversion to Hinduism, the Brahmans had to invent a special legend according to which the race was descended from Bhim, a hero of the *Mahabharata* (Soppitt, 1885 : 8).

The Kachari state as a whole comprised a conglomeration of various territories with different levels of socio-economic development, which becomes especially apparent from a comparison

of the plain and hill districts coming under the Kachari raja's rule. The difference between the raja's immediate environment and the remote hill communities was particularly great (Maretina, 1978 : 342). As for the proximity of advanced Hindu states, their influence provided such necessary attributes of the state as an ideology, a system of power organization, a language for decrees and other forms of official communication, etc., essential for shaping tribal unions into states.

Maretina (1978 : 343) opines that "we should look for the social prerequisites for the formation of the state in the emergence of socially unequal groups, or 'pre-classes', whose status was further consolidated by wars, but which had their origins precisely in the core of the community in the course of its social stratification". In her analysis Maretina finds the beginning of the *stratification process* in Kachari society in their original seven-clan system. She writes "this was probably the stage at which the *Semfong* (clans) began to develop from a purely genealogical group into a group of the socio-professional type, which amounted in fact to the rise of certain individual clans acquiring a privileged social status. Therefore social differentiation took place not so much within as among clans. The Kachari clans which could rise to dominant positions were the *Bodosa*, the senior-most (former ruling) clan; the *Thaosengs*, the clan to which the ruling dynasty belonged in the period for which data are available; the *Hasyungsa*, the clan of the King's relatives" (Crace, 1930; Maretiana, 1978 : 343). Social groups kept on increasing and by the time of the migration of the Kacharis to the North Kachar Hills, the number of the Semfongs increased to twelve, while at the time of their shift to Khaspur in the plains the names of forty-two *Semfongs* are mentioned (Maretina, 1978 : 344). The term *Semfong* refers to the male clan, the only type known during Dimapur Rule (Maretina, 1978 : 344). The

references about female clans *(jaddi)* are also to be found in early writings (Ghosh, 1965). The further process of social stratification in Kachari society involved the formation of 'ignoble' or commoner clans of agriculturists. Social stratification within the elementary cells or communities of the society resulted in the emergence of a state structure as well as being the social basis for it. The Kachari state thus was not an early-class type of society, but rather a pre-class one, in which the further evolution of social groups and their development into classes was arrested by the destruction of Kachari state and its disintegration into a number of separate territories, since the latter were united not by organic economic ties but only by the force of military power" (Maretina, 1978 : 345-346). However, after the fall of the state the respective fates of the plain and hill areas were quite different. The former were overrun by continually changing waves of conquerors, which resulted in the assimilation of the remaining plain population by the conquerors, so that they practically ceased to exist as a distinct ethnic group. As for the hill communities they retained their specific ethnic features and traditional institutions to a greater extent; the hill people never attained the level of a class society (Maretina, 1978 : 347-348). As regards the administrative systems of the Hills areas, "Each community had its own autonomous administration. Each village was headed by a *Kunang*, a village head who represented his community in all state matters. This post was hereditary and descended from father to son, though always subject to the sanction of the Senapati. The duties towards the *raja* and his government included the payment of taxes as well as several kinds of labour organization. Each village supplied a certain number of coolies to meet various needs of the court. Villages supplying soldiers to the army of state were exempted from taxation. The Kachari state was familiar

with the institution of slavery. Slave trade was widely practised. The Kacharis purchased slaves from the hills tribes, who took numerous captives in the course of their incessant inter-tribal wars, and paid for them in *cowries*, salt and dogs. Ethnically, the bulk of the slaves were related to various Kuki tribes and the Manipuris. The latter in most cases were ransomed by their relatives and returned home (Maretina, 1978 : 350). Maretina further noted that another category of dependent labourers was formed by debt slaves, who included not only those who were kept in servitude to redeem their own debts, but also the descendants of debtors who had been unable to repay their creditors in their lifetime (Maretina 1978 : 350-351).

There is some scanty evidence of the religious organization at court before the Kacharis' conversion to Hinduism. Eight families were attached to the Raja's Court from among which priests were appointed. Each family provided one priest, who sacrificed only to one particular deity. The high priest - *alu raja* - was regarded as chief spiritual adviser to the raja. Only the raja and the persons closest to him could offer sacrifices to the main gods such as Alow, Mali, and Wa (Maretina, 1978 : 351).

In her concluding remarks Maretina states categorically that "social stratification and social inequality are pre-conditions for the establishment of the state. However, the examples of other peoples, in particular the peoples of the hill territories of Northeast India neighbouring upon the Kachari area, show that social stratification by no means always results in state formation" (1978 : 351).

Other Cases of State Formation

It is interesting to note that in a large number of Kuki-Chin-Naga groups of people social stratification based on kinship and non-kinship criterion is an important feature of social structure but

all these societies belong essentially to 'state-less' type of political systems. Among the Lakher several dozen clans belong to different social stages; each of these stages corresponding to a particular social stratum. The Lakhers possess three such strata. The highest of these is *abei* (six clans), the second 'aristocratic' one, *phansang* (seventeen clans), and the lowest *macchi*, an undifferentiated social conglomeration of productive clans (Parry 1932 : 229). The Lushai exemplify a different type of social stratification. Among these people a specific clan "Sailo" belongs to the ruling social stratum (Shakespear, 1912 : 43-46). More examples of societies which underwent the process of social stratification will be provided separately. But, before doing that we shall examine a few examples of state-like structures within a few communities such as the Karbis, the Kukis, the Khasis, the Tipperas and the Riangs.

State-like Formation among the Karbis

The Karbi chief (or Raja, as some people have described him) has generally been described as a sort of centralized ruler, although he could never enjoy authority of any real kind. This is particularly because the Kingdom (the entire Karbi tribal territory) was never united through any effectve bureaucratic or governmental strcuture. The Karbi Chief, therefore, could never rule or control all his subjects. In reality, as we shall see, the subordinate officials such as *lindok* and *pimponar* enjoyed real powers and ultimately at village level the internal political system worked smoothly as an autonomous system. We find that, as in case of other tribal areas, there has been no change in traditional authority strcuture of Karbi village. We shall first describe the aspects of the political system at central or maximal tribal level.

Among the Karbi the state is a territorial

as well as an administrative unit, the political rights and obligations are territorially delimited. The Karbi state or the *'Karbi rajya* is divided into three broad territories named as *alongri.* Each *alongri* is again divided into territorial divisions known as *longri.* Each *longri* controls a number of villages. Villages are known as *rong.*

The Karbi chief, known as *karbi recho,* is the administrative and judicial head of the entire "tribal state". The three territorial divisions *(alongris)* are:

1. Rongkhang
2. Chinthong and
3. Amri

Each of these *alongris* is administered by a council of elders known as *lindok* and *pimpomar.* Administratively each *alongri* is autonomous but it functions under the direct control of the *Karbi recho.* The recruitment principle is so much kinship biased that distinct lineages are hereditary provided with distinct obligations and privileges. There are in all nine *lindoks,* out of which the *ronghang* lineage provides the *Karbi recho* to the society on a strict hereditary principle. Other eight *lindoks* are representatives of the eight lineages which enjoy equally prestigious position. The distribution of the *lindoks* in the three *alongris* of *rongkhang, chinthong* and *amri* is such that *rongkhang* consists of four lineages including the 'royal lineage' of *Karbi recho.* The *chinthong alongri* consists of three lineages and there are two lineages in *amri* territory. While in each *alongri* the *lindok* are the hereditary office holders; the *pimpomar* are recruited from the five main clans of the Karbi society, such as *inghti, inghy, teron, terang,* and *timung.* The Karbi are not specific about the number of *pimpomar* to be recruited in *alongri* councils. The *alongri* councils are known as *arnampharo amei* (Hazarika, 1978). At the same ime the *rong-*

khang alongri council is termed as *rechumei*. It is the *'royal council'* because this *alongri* permanently consists of the *Karbi recho*. It is found that all the *lindoks* belong to the prestigious lineages. The *'Karbi* chief' and all the *lindoks* come from the three main clans such as *inghy*, *teron* and *timung*. Thus we find that clans are divided according to their traditional, political as well as religious statuses. This is apparent in the method of recruitment of hereditary positions of *recho* and *lindok* belonging to higher clans and the position of *pimpomar* selected more democratically on the basis of equal representation.

It is observed that there are more than one *lindok* in every *alongri* council and each *lindok* has specific duties and responsibilities, be it organisation of religious ceremonies and judicial functions connected with maintenance of social norms and customs. *Longri* is a territory within an *alongri*. *Longri* is headed by *Habes*, who are recruited on harediterary principle. However no *Habe* is selected from the *ronghang* lineage whose privilege it is to provide the *Karbi chief*. Here we find that the lineage superiority of the *Karbi chief* is re-established by the very mode of recruitment of *Habe*. A *Habe* may be taken from any lineage except that of the chief. *Habes* are appointed by the *alongri councils*. The main function of the *Habe* is to appoint village headmen known as *Sarthe* and other village functionaries. Unlike *lindok* the *Habe* has no council but they are to preside over the different village-councils within their jurisdiction.

As a state society is more dominated by an elaborate administrative and judicial organisation we may briefly discuss here the method of social control which is an inseparable part of the political system. According to Goswami (1977), it is observed that the traditional, hierarchical organization virtually stand for collective decision in a meeting chaired by the lindok and assisted by the *pimpomar*

who freely express their opinion. The chief can take no decision of his own without reference to the council of his advisers. After a full discussion of a matter that comes up for decision all the participants place their views finally to arrive at an agreed solution which is nothing but a common consensus. The final outcome stands as the highest opinion held by the traditional leaders. There is no higher appellate authority over it. Likewise *Habes* are the appellate authority over the decisions taken by the village level authority. The Habe is assisted by the council of his advisers. No individual decision can be imposed on the *longri* level authority which is also collective authority as in the case of the *alongri* level authority.

As a matter of fact the whole administrative system is assigned to control the behaviour and conduct of the members of the society is relation to one another and to the group as a whole. The only means of their social control is the power of judiciary that is entrusted on them. All the village-level crimes and offences and other familiar disputes are settled by the village headman within the limits of his power of jurisdiction. The cases which are beyond his power are referred to the immediate higher officer, the *Habe*. Any case that cannot be settled in the *longri-level* by the *Habe* is referred to the *lindokpo*. The *lindokpo* then summons a meeting of *pimpomars* whom the *lindokpo* ominates. The case of sexual relations between members of the same clan can never be settled by the village level officials or by those at the *longri* level. These cases can only be settled by the *pimpómar*, *i.e.*, by the *territorial officials*, (Goswami, 1977; Athparia, 1978; Hazarika, 1978; Das, *et al.*,1982).

The Kuki Chiefdom

The old Kukis are democratic communities, while the *new Kukis* are subject to the chiefs (Mackenzie,

1884 : 438). Among the Thadoes there were different types of chiefs, some had royal lineage (Stewart,1855). Stewart spoke of the 'growth of territorial chiefs' among the Thadoes. The fact remains, however, that, as in many other cases, the Thadoe chieftainship could be consolidated only under the British patronage. Prior to the British arrival there is reference to "a limited elective system to elect a chief on the village level" (J. Macrae - "Account of the Kookis or Lunctas", *Asiatic Researches*, Vol.VII, 1801, p. 185). The question may be asked as to the very existence of village-like life ever enjoyed by these people. Stewart has categorically stated that "the Kookis are naturally a migratory race, never occupying the same place for more than two, at the utmost three years" (1855 : 633). Shaw also observed similar situation among the Thadoes, "Persons who are not related to Thadoe Chiefs are to be seen as heads of the villages just because they have some wealth behind them and are, in consequence, able to get some ready followers. (Shaw, 1929 : 16). Hutton observed that "Thadoes, ruled as they are by their own well recognised elders and managed their own affairs in their own way and had recourse to the courts only in exceptional cases" (Hutton's *Introduction* to Shaw's book).

The British support for new Kuki settlements created an area of tension in the tribal world of Manipur. "The Kookis (possessing fire arms) in course of migration, captured lands and villages occupied by the Kabuis and the Kacha Nagas" (Mackenzie, 460). We have elsewhere described the identity question of the Kukis (old and new) in the context of the Lushai-Kuki-Naga ethnic constellation. Thus it may be stated that at various levels the kinship and territorial elements are very much involved in the organization of the traditional Kuki political systems.

Syiemship Among the Khasi and the Jaintia State ormation

The Syiemship among the Khasis is an old political institution. Besides Syiem, the other heads of the Khasi states are called as Lyngdoh, Wahadadar and Sirdar. Word 'Syiem' is derived from the Khasi word *Mynsiem*, meaning the soul. All these offices are elective. The British always recognized and confirmed the statuses of the Syiems and other rulers. From 1952 onwards this power rests with the Khasi Hills District Council. According to tradition the Syiemship remained with one family but originally the succession was regulated by a small electoral body consisting of Lyngdohs of certain priestly clans. The Sirdars and Basans were later included in the electoral college. In some cases the Syiems were elected more democratically by the people themselves when the electoral Durbar could not come to an unanimous decision. Although all the Chiefs (Syiems, Lyngdohs, Sirdars and Wahadadars) are elected but the mode of election always differed from one place to another. In Cherra, the Mantris of twelve ruling clans nominate a Syiem. Jirong was upgraded to Syiemship in past where the appointment of Syiem is the free choice of the people. The entire male population here participated to elect their head (Bareh, 1967 : 270). The electoral council of Khyrim is headed by a Lyngskor, who is the head of the Mylliem Ngap clan. At present total number of electors is thirty-one *i.e.*, one Lyngskor, six Lyngdoh, twenty-four Mantris representing six Rajas or units of Khyrim State. A majority vote is must. The electors may disqualify any heir for viable reasons (Bhattacharya, 1985).

The succession to the Syiemship is possible only from the female side, except in Khyrim. Two main principles are that, "the deceased Syiem should be succeeded by the eldest of his uterine brothers. Failing this, a brother, by the eldest

of his sister's daughters; failing this, grand-nephews by the eldest of the sons of his mother's sister; and failing this too, first cousins by the eldest of his male cousins on the female side, other than first cousins, those nearest in degree of relationship having prior claim. If there were no male heirs, women are eligible, in that case eldest of his uterine sisters would become Syiem and failing such sisters and maternal cousins, the eldest daughter's daughter would rank next. In the absence of the collaterals, the eldest grand-daughter of the sister of Syiem would be the heir. The above rules applied broadly to Langrin, Mylliem, Myriaw, Malaysohmat, Nongkhlaw and Nongspung Syiemships. The second rule applied to Cherra and Rambrai provided that the eldest male maternal cousin could rank as equal with the eldest uterine brothers. Failing this, nephews and grand-nephews became eligible" (Bhattacharya, 1985).

According to one source 'at the earliest time the Khasi State actually meant the Jaintia Kingdom and that the Jaintias established themselves much prior to the Khasi people" (Bhattacharya, n.d.). The tradition says that Jaintia state was ruled by Brahmanical rulers in very ancient times, and that is mentioned as the *'strirajya'* (female kingdom) in the *Mahabharata.* It is suggested that the name of Jaintia Devi is mentioned in the *Pauranik* and *Tantrik literature from which* kingdom of Jaintia may be inferred (Bhuyan, 1964). Dr. P.C. Choudhury locates this women kingdom nearby the southern border of the present Nowgong district in Assam (1966). *Raja-Tarangini* also refers this *stri-rajya* which is believed to be the 'pramilar-des' in connection with the invasion of Pragjyotishpur by Muktapida-Lalitaditya in the eighth century A.D. (Bhuyan, 1965). The Jaintia people have a tradition that Subtna (Sutanga) Syiemship, which is believed to be the oldest Syiemship (kingship), was originated from a fish bride named "Ka Lih Dhokha" whom U Loh Ryndi from war Umri side

married. The Khasi story says that the origin of the Syiems of Shillong belonged to the two children who were appointed by the nobles as the Syiems in the country of Shillong *i.e.*, the present Khyrim and Mylliem states, born of 'Ka Pah Syntiew, the flower-lured one' who was living in a cave called Marai nearby the present village of Pomlakrai. These children were believed to be given by God and as such were known as 'Ki Siem-Blei' (the God Kings) of Shillong (Barkataki, 1970). Mother tradition of the Khasi is that God created heaven and mother-earth and both were connected by a ladder of great tree called 'Ka Diengiei', a connection from the female line. These traditional stories became a part of the heritage of the Khasi-Jaintia 'national-legends'. There is a Jaintia legend identical with the ancient Greek-Trojan war of wooden horse that long long ago there was a village named Manar (which is no more now) nearby the village of Shangpung. Both the villages had their own heads to maintain the administration of justice, law and order. Both the villages had rivalry and the Manar village could not be defeated by war. Therefore, the people of Shangpung pretended to conclude a peaceful treaty which the people of Manar accepted to meet on a particular date in a particular place called Thangskai with the arrangement of festivities by offering many white and unspotted goats from both sides for making sacrifices. The people of Manar came sincerely with their promises; but the people of Shangpung arrived with such goats in disguise made out of the well-equipped warriors covered with white woollen cloth and made to crawl like goats, killed the people of Manar. Hearing this treacherous news Queen Jalapang of the village of Manar fled away towards the Tiniang Hill. Thus in the legendary description both the Khasi and the Jaintia lean towards the matriarchal priority (Bhattacharya, n.d.).

A reference to a story of Khasi female parallel-

ed by Queen named Ka Urmi Rani of Assam during the early period of Varmans in Assam, given by H. Bareh with Gurdon's suggestion of possible connection of title Hadem with Hidimba, indicates the existence of the Khasi state by that time, *i.e.*, in the 6th century A.D. But Bareh's suggestion (so also Gurdons') of the Hidimba Kingdom of Mahabharata from the Synteng word 'Hadem' as Khasi state is not acceptable, because the Hidimba or Hirimba Kingdom was established by the Kacharis. The Kacharis established capitals at Dimapur, Maibong and Khaspur and they claimed their descent from King Sasemoha, a successor of epic hero Bhim and who ruled in Hedamba or Hirimba where there was Heramba *rakshashini.* Bhim's wife (from this kingdom) is referred as Hirimbee in the *Mahabharata.* Historical researches have accepted the Hirimba kingdom as Kachari kingdom. Moreover, the word is 'Hidimba' or 'Hirimba' and not 'Hedamba'. Therefore "the suggestion given by Bareh (so also Gurdon) that Hidimba kingdom as a Khasi state from the word 'Hadem' is not acceptable. Over and above the name Hidimba or Hirimba occurs in inscription and other records, and it is rightly suggested that Dimapur is a corruption of Hidimbapur" (Acharya, 1966 : 203) and that Dimapur was the capital of the Kacharis.

The Stri-Rajya or Pramilar-Des, which is identified by S.K. Bhuyan as Jaintia kingdom, had a clash with Lalditya in connection with the invasion of Assam (Kamrupa) in the 8th century A.D., at the bank of Kolong river in the Nowgong district (Assam) where the Jaintia people had either commercial connection or territorial connection. It is interesting to note from the *Jayantia Buranji* that "Ahom King Pratap Singh granted a plot of land named Phulaguri, north of the Koleng river, to establish a fair by the Jaintias, at the request of the Jaintia King Jasa Manik", and where the references to the Jaintias are made as Garos.

Another reference is that the Khasis invaded Nepal (Mazumdar, 1968) but their conquest was short-lived.

It is agreed that the *Syiemship* is based on the religious usages and as such an annual state ceremony is to be conducted at the ancestral residence of the Syiem's mother *(Ingsod)* and its keeper is known as *'Ka Syiem Sad'* -- a sort of Syiempriestess. Ka Syiem-Sad is responsible for due performance of state religious ceremonies (Gurdon, 1919 : 70). All religious ceremonies are conducted by Lyngdoh. According to one belief "the Syiems have been the godly creation" (Barkataki, 1970 : 146, Bareh, 1967 : 249). Syiemship thus appears as "the limited monarchical system of government . . . Syiem being the priest ruler upholding the religion" (Bhattacharya, 1985).

Village Administration among the Khasis, Jaintias and the Garos

In the centre of village administration in Khasi society is the 'headman'. Headman may mean a *Mantri*, a *Syiem Raid*, a *Basan*, a *Lyngdoh Raid*, *Matabor*, *Rangbah Shnong* and an elder. A village always had a Durbar headed by headman. Duty of the Durbar was to maintain peace, improving the roads, markets and collection of market revenue. Village Durbars also arranged festivals and sent their offerings to Syiems during state-level ceremonies (Bareh, 1967 : 277-278). In their judicial capacity, however, these Durbars acted as village courts. The village courts always tried cases in accordance with the tribal customary laws. But the headman alone did not have the power to decide any issue. There was always a long discussion over any issue before a consensus is arrived at.

Robinson is the first writer on Jaintia law and judicial system. Robinson (Quoted by Pakem, 1985) observed that "a day before the day affixed for the sitting of the judicial Durbar, an annoucement was made in the evening, all adult male

members must stop going to their daily work to attend the durbar. The proceedings are opened by a headman and witnesses raised and the chief at the close summarized the evidence of both sides and with the decision of the durbar pronounced the judgement". On this level, "the headman or the Wahehchnong used to summon the village durbar or Dorbar Chnong through the village crier" (Pakem, 1985).

On the other hand, each Garo village has traditionally been "an independent political unit and, therefore, all the quarrels and disputes were settled by convening the meeting of all the heads of families of the village. By tradition and custom, the head of the clan called as Nokma conducted the proceedings of such meetings. There was no question of appeal to higher courts as there was none" (Sangma, 1985). As the president of the Council, the Nokma will do much of the questioning but he would heavily lean on council members for their comments. After all have reached a consensus the decision is pronounced.

Early Tribal States in Tripura

A state came into being for the first time in the early 15th century in Tripura. It was Ratna Manikya who was assisted in the establishment of his state by the Muslim rulers of Bengal. This was, however, not a state with complete command over the whole tract. Various tribes had their own autonomous territories. B.K. Bhattacharya reports that these tribes were sometimes independent and sometimes subjected by one another (1980). Each tribe had its own traditional political system based on village administrators, chiefs at maximal tribal level and an age grade system. Tribal chiefs or village headmen had links with the centralized ruler but it was normally confined to "paying and collecting of taxes and Nazaranas" (Bhattacharya, 1980).

Situation in Tripura was completely different

from Manipur where the centralized Hindu ruler of Imphal had more institutional methods of regular contacts and cultural interaction with tribal chieftains and tribal headmen from different autonomous tribal territories. At Imphal "a few annual gatherings for the people of the state used to be held and people from different parts of the state used to attend. The venue was the palace. One such occasion was Hiruhitongba (Boat race), in which tribal chiefs had some important functions to perform. *Haochongba* was another such an occasion in which the tribes from all corners of Manipur gathered in the open arena adjacent to the palace and presented their traditional songs and dances. As such, the tribal chiefs did not pay any regular tax, and did not extend any labour to till the land of the King. At the same time the King checked spread of Vaishnabism in the tribal areas and as a result of that we find that Vaishnabism had been restricted to the valley only" (B.K. Das Gupta, 1979).

In Tripura the Tripuris or the Tipperas and the Riangs were the original ruling tribes who had their own kinds of state system. We shall describe here the patterns of these tribal states.

From Chiefdom to State : The Tipperas

The contemporary scholars hold the view that the name *Tripuri* is the sanskritized version of *Tipra* (or *Triperra).* When the Deva dynasty was declining in the Eastern Bengal, the chief of the *Tipra* tribe rose in prominence in the hilly and plain regions of Tripura. The earliest chief of the tribe who successfully defended his country against the Muslim power of Bengal, as recorded in *Rajmala,* was *Chhengthung-Fa. Tipra* tribe belongs to Bodo group. The Bodos who settled on the bank of the river Brahamaputra, gradually occupied the Garo hills and Nowgong area. From Nowgong they extended their occupation to Cachar

and then to Sylhet and then further south to the Tripura state.

The upper stratum of the Tripuri tribal state composed of the *Raja*, the princes and the *thakurs*. Saigal has observed 12 classes of Thakurs, who enjoy the highest status amongst the people. The Thakurs enjoyed the status and prestige only next to the Maharaja, and lived in and around the capital.

The internal political system of the Tiperra village was also unique in the sense that it remained self-governing. Most important aspect of this political system was the "council of village elders". The designation of the chief of village council differed from one village to another. Somewhere he was called *Chaudhuri* and in some places he was called *Sardar*. The village council consisted of *Chaudhury*, *Karbari* (secretary to chief), and *Khandal*, a sepoy-cum-peon. The main functions of the council were to administer justice, collect taxes, perform community worship and to solve common problems of villagers.

Pre-state Structure among the Riangs

The Riangs are the second largest tribe in Tripura. In the past this tribe also ruled one part of Tripura, at one stage. The Riangs had an elaborate administrative structure. The *Roy* was the King for the whole tribe. Riangs had an integrated three-tier administrative set-up at three levels. The village level administration was conducted by the *Chaudhury*, Chief of the village, *Karbari*, Secretary to the chief, and *Daoa*, serving as a messenger. There were 14 *Dafas* or sections among the Riang tribe. Each *dafa* had its own administrative head. These heads were also the *ex-officio* members of the government for the whole tribe. The designation of heads of *dafa*, however, differed from one another. Each *dafa* also had its own proper name. Designation of head of some of the *dafas* were as follows: Roy and Karma are heads of

Tuinni *Dafa*; Kachkau is head of Riang Dafa, Hazra is head of Masa section. In all there were 27 heads for the 14 Dafas and they had 19 different designations. These heads together formed the central administrative machinery for the Riangs. The Roy remained the King for the whole tribe, and the Kachkau acted as the minister to him. The Roy and Kachkau had separate groups of people to serve under their direct supervision.

Domain of Social Stratification

Basically a stratified society is one that is divided into two or more groups of people, and these groups are ranked high and low relative to one another. When the people in one such group or stratum are compared with those in another, marked differences in privileges, rewards, restrictions, and obligations become apparent. Members of low-ranked groups will tend to have fewer privileges than those in higher-ranked groups. Social stratification, therefore, amounts to institutionalized inequality. The basic unit of stratification is known as a social class. Members of a class enjoy equal or nearly equal prestige according to the way this is defined. Social stratification can be based on many criteria, such as wealth, cultural level, legal status, birth, personal qualities and ideology. Based on one or another of these criteria the tribal societies of North-east variously manifest aspects of social stratification. We shall describe below a few examples.

Before the establishment of monarchy the Manipur valley had no centralized authority. "Each of the seven clans (Mangang, Luwang, Khuman, Angom, Moirang, Khaba-nganba and Sarang-leisang-them) had its own territory and the genealogical head, *Ningthou*, who ruled over the clan members. These clans fought with one another for acquiring more land and brides in marriage and ultimately, the Meitei (the Mangang clan was at that time known as Meitei) clan won over the others. The

central authority in the form of kingship was established under Laininghou (as the Maharaja). During this period the people had a well-defined service relationship with the Maharaja who was head of genealogical structure. The lineage members who had close structural distance from the Maharaja formed the nobility who performed the prestigious services, as the high officials in the administration, judiciary and military offices in the palace. The lineage members who had greater lineage distance formed the group of commoners. They performed the *lalupkaba* service (free service given to the Maharaja for 10 days in every forty days). The rest of the lineage members who were structurally far away from the Maharaja formed the degraded Meitei (Saha, 1982). The nobility enjoyed the free land of the highest quality to maintain their family. The common Meitei who performed *lalupkaba* enjoyed a fixed quantity of fertile land by paying a regular tax in kind (Allen, 1905). From this case it is not difficult for us to understand the acute hierarchical relations existing within the society.

Special privileges have always been enjoyed by the men of higher class. For example, in Nocte society, which is rigidly stratified, in view of Furer-Haimendorf (1962), the men of a chiefly clan seek their principal wives from among the daughters of the chiefs of other villages, but may take secondary wives from the commoner clans of their own villages. Though in close geographic proximity to several Wanchu villages, Noctes never intermarry with Wanchus, and two tribes look upon each other as distinct but not necessarily as hostile communities.

Social Stratification among the Nagas

Among the Konyak Nagas also the chiefs (Angs) marry only in their counterpart chiefly families from neighbouring villages. The Konyak situation

is described elsewhere, in this chapter. Among the Maring Nagas of Manipur the posts of priests and headmen are "hereditary in two (senior) sibs (clans) which are superior to the rest". These clans are Dangsa and Charanga. R.K. Das reports that "status in Maring society could be achieved by the display of ritual wealth in the form of performing status-giving rituals (*thilt hai*, for example) involving a feast of merit, which demands lavish spending. A man would erect a pile of stones to commemorate his name, he would then be considered a rich man. McCulloch (1871) states, "A Maring rich man erects a pile of stone to commemorate his name and kills six *mithuns*. The Maring society is thus roughly stratified into three groups - rich, poor, and slaves or captives" (R.K. Das, 1981). The concept of richman has undergone change. Ritual wealth is no longer equated with economic wealth. Economic wealth in terms of monetary value has struck at the very root of ritual identity of a clan.

The Maring villages have been land owning, territorially organized unit The "village council" headed by *Khullakpa* controlled the hunting and 'warfare' (R.K. Das, 1980). Other than village council there was no other authority either at inter-village level or at tribal level. The indigenous political system of Maring is based on principles of seniority. Even today the old headmen work with new roles. Some voluntary associations at the tribal level have grown in importance such as "Maring Naga Racial Association" which has been formed with a view to integrate the Marings into a well-knit tribe. The "Maring Naga Student Union" is functioning since 1970.

Social Stratification among the Ahoms

Regarding the traditional Ahom social system we are told that there were numerous divisions, some of which had denoted ranks and formed

a sort of hereditary aristocracy, while others were functional.

There were three main divisions: (1) the Chamuas or gentry, (2) the Kheluwas or functional sections, (3) the Meldagiyas or sections assigned to various members of the royal family to serve as attendants (Reports of *Census of Assam*, 1891; quoted in Barua, 1978 : 18).

Among Ahoms there were seven original clans called as *phaids* or more particularly as *Satghariya Ahom*. Of the first three one *phaid* is that of *Raja*, and other two *phaids* are *Buragohain* (senior-minister), and *Borgohain* (junior-minister). With regard to the remaining four clans there are differences of opinion (Barua, 1978 : 18). The King was the supreme head of the State. The King had to be selected from one of the royal lineages, such as, Dihingiya, Chringiya, Tungkhungiya, Namrupiya, Samaguria, Tipamiya, and Parvatiya. The members of different princely dynasties sprang from their common ancestor Sukapha, and their settlement in different places paved the way for fission and ultimately the emergence of "different sub-phaids" (Barua, 1978 : 18). In the kingdom, the Buragohain and Borgohain were placed next to the King. These officials were recruited from the families that sprang from the principal nobles. As the territory of the Ahoms was extended, several posts were filled up by drafting persons of proved ability. During 1497-1539 A.D. a new post styled as *Borpatra Gohain* was created. The person who could hold this position was born and brought up in a Naga family (H.C. Goswami, *Purani Assam Buranji*, 1922 : 41). Exhaustive discussion on "state formation" among the Ahoms is provided in Chapter 6.

Aspects of Oppression : Inequality and Slavery

Slavery is a condition rarely welcomed by the slaves. Although several authors have used the

word 'slave' to describe certain categories of people but we are not sure about the analytic validity of use of such a word. This could be stated boldly because there is hardly any attempt on structural-functional analysis of 'slavery' in North east India. The so-called slaves are generally derived from without a society, more particularly as war captives. Several brief references are available on slavery in Northeast India. In one such example, Kumar (1979) wrote that "during the early period British rule, Singphos and other Himalayan tribes attacked the plains of Assam and took thousands of people as slaves". Now, in examples like this we do not know the exact social consequences and institutional patterns of social systems that emerged afterwards.

The slaves, known as *Khulo* among the Aka of Arunachal, form a separate class and they live with their masters in same village. Such slaves have to till the soil and look after the fields, cattle and household of their masters. These slaves are recruited from outside the tribe (Misra, 1982). The Sulung, who call themselves *Pui*, are a small tribe who provide labour force not only to the Aka but also to the Dafla (now called as Nishi or Bangni). The Sulungs call the Daflas as Atto, meaning master (Misra, 1982). Misra writes that the Sulungs (in past) were procured by raids and capture. Mahapatra has, however, given a more convincing interpretation of this situation.

"The case of Sulung of Arunachal Pradesh is very interesting, who were food-gatherers and hunters (till recently) and producers of arrow poisons and iron implements. They were held in subjugation by Dafla and Miji tribesmen of Kameng and Subansiri districts. There is some inter-change of goods, and services between the Sulung families, on the one hand, and their Dafla or Miji patrons. This relation on family to family basis continued for genera-

tions, in an irreversible hierarchical relationship" (Mahapatra, 1982).

We are also told that "(among the Daflas) the owning of slaves has a prestige value, and the masters feel proud to tell the number of slaves they have and the manner in which they have acquired them. In Dafla society a person's social status and prestige is measured in terms of slaves, wives, Tibetan bells, *mithuns*, beads, etc." (Saikia, 1964 : 15). The ex-Daflas divide themselves into two main classes, the *freemen* called as *nete* and the *slaves* called as *nera*. The slaves are devoid of certain rights in the social and religious life. But slavery was not a very rigid institution. We can say this because 'there are cases when *neras* (slaves) could become *netes* (freemen) (Saikia, 1964 : 15). There are both male slaves *(nera)* and female slaves *(pakne)*. While the male slaves were purchased from the hills, the majority of female slaves were acquired as parts of dowries. Saikia has also mentioned that although there is no particular slave clan among the 'Daflas' but a person on becoming a slave ceases to be a member of his own clan and adopts the clan name of his master. Sex relations between slaves and masters are condemned. Saikia found that a village headman himself was once a slave from the hills, who later fled away to Charduar and became the interpreter of the Political Officer, as he could very soon pick up the Assamese language. He is now comparatively wealthy, with four wives and several attendants. He takes an active part in the village council and as a medicine-man he has acquired a good social status.

According to Saikia (1964 : 19) "there was slavery among the Apa-Tanis of the Subansiri Frontier Division, N.E.F.A. Furer-Haimendorf found a master with fifty slaves. The Apa-Tanis are divided into two rigid classes, the patrician class called *mite* and the lower class called *mura*.

Among Apa-Tanis a *mura* cannot become a *mite*. One becomes the member of a class by birth. But among Daflas the distinction is not so rigid. Saikia has also stated that slavery is not a form of trade, though a master can sell his slaves when he wishes. But inspite of social mobility they think that in the other world a slave will be a slave and the master a master. The slaves must serve in the other world too. Moreover, a possessor of a slave can easily go after death to the other world, whereas those without slaves have to face many difficulties" (1964 : 19-20).

A slavery-like institution called as *Bawi* had existed among the Lushai people. It was customary for the Lushai chiefs to have certain *Bawis* in their households who could be acquired in various ways. There was yet another institution called as *sal*. *Sal* were generally the captives from the plains areas. There were three kinds of *Bawis*, such as, (1) *Inpui-chhung Bawi*, (2) *Chemsen Bawi*, and (3) *Tuklut Bawi*. Lalrimawia's analysis reveals that the *sal* category of people are more like slaves than the Bawis (1982).

The *sal* had "no status and they were freely sold and bought. The children of *sal* were, however, treated with kindness by the chiefs" (Lalrimawia, 1982). The Bawis were those who were driven by hunger to take refuge in the chief's house. Orphans and widows formed the bulk of this class of Bawis. The Bawis were treated as members of chief's family. The Bawis looked after chiefs agricultural operations, fishing traps and in turn they were provided with food and shelter. The female Bawi collected firewood in the jungle and water from the fountains, pounded paddy for the supply of rice for the day, weaved clothes, worked in *jhum* fields and looked after the children of the chiefs. The Bawis could also acquire the private property of their own. Even there was a special ritual called as *Saphun* by which a *Inpuichhung Bawi* could be permanently incorporated into the chief's family.

The *Chemsen Bawis* were 'criminals', who, to escape the consequences of their misdeeds took refuge in the chief's house. The chief could protect such a criminal and the avenger was counted guilty, or an enemy of the chief, if he continued to make attempts of vengeance. Debtors also sought protection of the chiefs for inability to pay their debt. The chief used to pay their debt on condition that they and their children become Bawis. Thieves had become Bawis in order to avoid punishment, and civil disputes were decided in favour of the party who was willing to become a Bawi of the chief. The *Chemsen Bawis* occupied a position similar to that of *Inhrang Bawi*. The bride price of the daughters of the *Chemsen Bawi* went to the chief.

The government did not recognize the *Chemsen* and *Tuklut Bawi* and *Sal* system; but the *Inpuichhung Bawi* was recognized since it was considered to be the most suitable institution which gave shelter and protection to the weakest section of the Lushai society. In view of Lalrimawia (1982) "this had been one of the praise-worthy practices of the Lushai chiefs which successfully avoided the 'begging' in the society". However, the fact remains that no *Bawi* could become free unless he has paid through court a sum of Rs. 40 to the chief. In May 1923, A.W. Botham, Chief Secretary to Assam Government, reported that the character of the *Bawi* system had materially changed. The liberty given to any man to convert his status as a Bawi into a civilian with payment of Rs. 40 had a great effect. At the same time the Christian chiefs either released the *Bawi's* altogether or treated them on an entirely different footing. In March 1927 the Assam Government reported that the terms *'Bawi'* and *'Bawi-man'* were no longer used.

Feasts for Acquiring Status among the Nagas

There is evidence to show that despite general

appearance of equality among many Naga tribes, aspects of inequality are revealed in unequal shares in exercise of power, wealth and prestige symbols. Among the Nagas the wealth is greatly sought after in the shape of rice and meat. This is because through their accumulation and distribution (through feasts) the men may acquire the positions of 'big-men' and 'leaders'. Among Aos the feasts are also given in order to establish inter-village, and inter-tribal political alliances.

Apart from more obvious, kinship based and hereditary positions of senior and junior clans among many Naga tribes, the appearance of stratification may be attributed to a large number of other factors. Among several Naga tribes, such as Angami, Sangtam, Ao, Mao and Rengma, any person may acquire the most prestigious rank of 'big-man' (Das, 1983) by giving a series of communal feasts to a large number of people on separate occasions. These feasts are rightly called as "feasts of merit". Apart from these feasts, the mechanisms of "ritual-kinship-alliances" between individuals, villages and even between distinct tribes appear to be of great significance. We may describe here some of these aspects in greater details.

Prestige-gaining Feasts among the Zounuo-Keyhonuo Naga

Values of prestige, privilege, and, to some extent power are even now measured by old and traditional standards among the Zounuo-Keyhonuo. One principle is that of re-distribution of food through feasts. To do this the surplus of food is needed and which requires several years of hardwork by men and women (women in Naga societies normally carry out major portion of agricultural work) associated with a bit of good fortune. Prestige and the status of *Zhodimi* among the Zounuo-Keyhonuo is achieved by one who has already given twelve numbers

of large communal feasts inviting at different stages the following categories of people: (1) One's own lineage members, (2) clan members, (3) clan of self and clan of wife, (4) All the clans (whole village), (5) neighbouring villages, and ultimately the whole tribal segment.

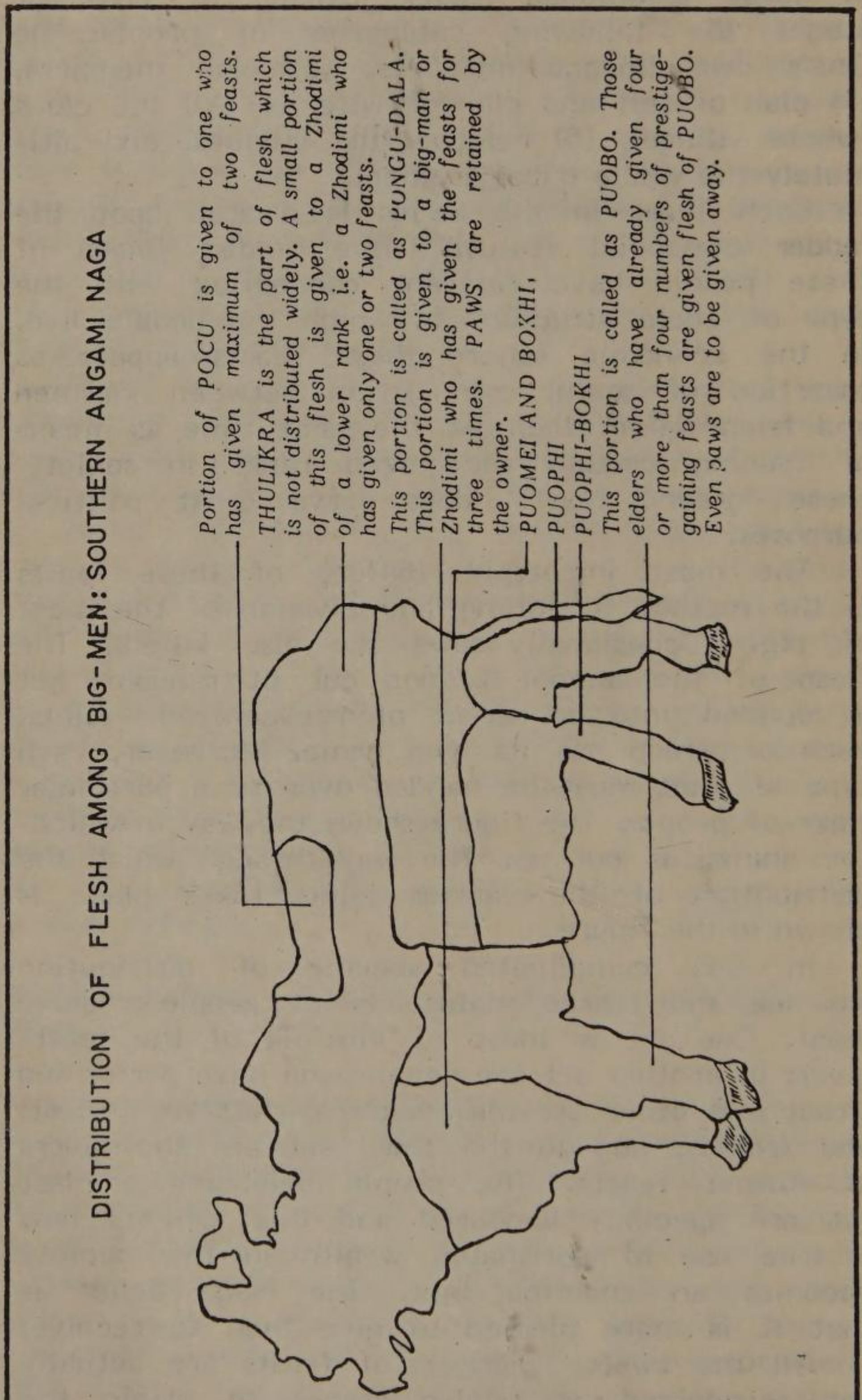
Each feast in the series is a step upon the ladder of social status. These *graded feasts* of these people have relevant connection with the type of *social structure* in which the people live. In the economic sphere these feasts appear as assertion of social competition between kinsmen and friends *(khrietho)*. At the same time as means of gaining certain recognized ranks in society, these 'graded feasts' does serve great political purposes.

The most important feature of these feasts is the method of killing and division of the meat of pig. (Occasionally cows are also killed.) The flesh of the animal is not cut at random, but is divided into a series of recoganized joints, each of which has its own name. Moreover, each type of joint must be handed over to a particular *class* of people. The figure shows the way in which the animal is cut up. The way through which the distribution of the various joints takes place is shown in the figure.

In this complicated scheme of distribution we see that three main sets of people receive meat. One set is those of kinsfolk of the feast-giver; in another set are people who have performed ritual and other services, such as *Kemovo* (priest) and friends; and in the third set are the givers of former feasts. The people belonging to last set are specially honoured and this exhibits how a free use of perishable wealth in this society becomes an enduring fact. The Naga belief is that it is more blessed to give than to receive.

All the twelve number of feasts are actually not recognized as twelve stages to attain the relative positions of superiority. These feasts are grouped in the following manner:

DISTRIBUTION OF FLESH AMONG BIG-MEN: SOUTHERN ANGAMI NAGA


Portion of POCU is given to one who has given maximum of two feasts.
THULIKRA is the part of flesh which is not distributed widely. A small portion of this flesh is given to a Zhodimi of a lower rank i.e. a Zhodimi who has given only one or two feasts.
This portion is called as PUNGU-DALA. This portion is given to a big-man or Zhodimi who has given the feasts for three times. PAWS are retained by the owner.
PUOMEI AND BOKHI,
PUOPHI
PUOPHI-BOKHI
This portion is called as PUOBO. Those elders who have already given four or more than four numbers of prestige-gaining feasts are given flesh of PUOBO. Even paws are to be given away.

Grade 1 : Feast of Tem-za

The feast of *tem-za* is the beginning of the series. It is the first feast which can be given by any new couple. Only three or four pigs are killed and the flesh alongwith rice-beer is distributed among one's *thenu* (clan) and lineage members. Close friends who have rendered services may also be given the flesh.

Grade 2 : Feast of Zhotho-Keda

Three oxen are killed (one provided by feast giver's father; one by wife's father; and one is by the giver himself and his wife). In this feast also one's own clan members and friends receive the flesh, alongwith rice-bear. By giving this feast the prestige symbol of special post called as 'ye-kenava' is to be put on his house gate by feast giver. On death of such feast giver a special basket called as *likhunu* will be hanged on his grave.

Grade 3 : Feast of Zhotho-Kehi

Zhotho-Kehi is considered to be a very significant feast in which some ten to fifteen oxen are killed and the whole village is invited. Every villager gets a share of flesh and rice-beer. It is in Zhotho-Kehi feast that those respected elders *(Zhodimi)* who have already given several feasts and who are classified into 'seven grades' are specially honoured. Each type of joint is given to a particular *Zhodimi.*

Thulikra is flesh from any part of animal and this portion is given to lowest ranked *Zhodimi.* Each rank is attained by giving a specified number of feasts. Thus the highest rank of the "most prestigious man" is attained by one who has given all the twelve feasts. *'Pocu'* is the particular part of the flesh which is given to a person who has given minimum of two feasts. Likewise the

seven different portions of flesh, as shown in figure are given to seven classes of *Zhodimi.* One who has given the Zhotho-Kehi feast shall be entitled to use "Kirhuva" post on his house roof, but not the *Kika* (house-horn).

Grade 4 : Feast of Zhotho-tsusu

One can place *kika* (big, wooden-horn) over house roof only when he has given the feast of *Zhotho-tsusu.* From fourth to tenth feast the same term of *Zhotho-tsusu* is used.

Grade 5 : Feast of Ezade Feast

The eleventh and twelfth numbers of feasts are called as *ezade.* It is very difficult to find many people who have given *ezade* feasts. One who does it is regarded as very fortunate. Only such a person is entitled to erect 'monolith', "Zho-tho-tsu", in the outskirt of the village, in the name of self and his wife. Such a stone remains "memorial" for many generations to come.

The feasts of merit given by the Naga tribes are the traditional means of raising the standing and position of a household in the local hierarchical scale, outside the realm of kinship. Closely associated with the feasts are certain rights. Those who perform the elaborate rituals of the communal feasts are honoured throughout their life in and outside their village *arenas*, and such people thus enjoy the position of 'big-men' in the village.

Among the Mao Naga whom we may regard as a part of Angami Naga (see J.H. Hutton, 1969) the initial feast of merit is called *orakaso* which takes place during the dry season. During this feast one unspotted ox is sacrificed and the meat distributed to all the houses of the village, after the offerings to the god *Koki-achiow* and the goddess *Aonopfupei.* All the clan heads of the village assemble in the house of the merit-

seeker to drink rice-beer. During the second feast, called as *novukovu*, pieces of meat are distributed to the villagers and relatives, as an announcement that the merit-seeker will soon give the feast of *Omokozu*. In the *novukovu* feast, which lasts three days, one pig and three oxen are sacrificed, and the third day is prescribed for work in the rice fields. The *omokozu* feast lasts five days, involving sacrifice of two oxen, two male pigs and one cow with calf. The visitors drink rice-beer and eat meat, and relatives and close friends give monetary help to the merit-seeker. *Omokozu* is then followed by the feast of spearing the cattle, known as *Otukazhe*. Feasting for *Otukazhe* lasts for five days. In the evening of fifth day the female members of the village are fed with two pieces of meat and rice-beer. At this stage the merit-seeker is allowed to erect a stone monument in his own name. A stone for the purpose is search-ed and the same is ritually purified and a sacrificed chicken is offered to the spirit of stone. In the night the merit-seeker will observe in his dreams whether or not the spirit is favourable. If unfavour-able he will select another stone and proceed as before. The stone finally selected is dragged with creepers to the place where it is to be erect-ed, generally near the inter-village path on the terraced fields, so that it can be seen by passers-by.

Such *Zhosotu* (stones) are normally erected in rows and those of the same clan members are placed adjacent to each other. While the stone is being dragged the merit-seeker's wife must remain standing, it being believed that if she sits the stone cannot be moved. After the erection of the monolith, foodgrains and seeds of edible vegetables are buried in front of it with rituals. Then the erected stone is stained with the blood of a sacrificed pregnant cow, and rice-beer is poured over it. After this, the villagers assemble in the house of the merit-seeker and spend two consecutive days in feasting and drinking rice-beer.

The merit-seeker and his wife are now each allowed to wear a cloth called as *Zhososa* (O.K. Singh, 1978).

Politics of Kinship among the Ao Naga

This author studied the Ao political system in two villages called as Ungma and Ao-Mokokchung in the year 1977-78. People of both the studied villages consider the entire Ao Naga population as one endogamous group and they use the term *kin* to denote their tribe. Like most other Naga tribes existing clans can be arranged in different levels of segmentation stretching back to original ancestors. The segmentary clan-lineage structure had been an effective device for mobilizing people at various levels of conflicts in the past. The largest dialect groups among the Ao Naga *i.e.*, Chongli, Mongsen and Changki can be regarded as phratries. The affiliations within and outside these phratries are based on some special social unity that arose from the geographical proximity, cooperation in warfare, and other such social situations in the past. While the clans/lineages are localized, the phratries, on the other hand, are large in size and are geographically dispersed subdivisions of the Ao Naga society. The dominant forms of property ownership and social control are to be observed in the domain of the clans. The tendency toward warfare and the labour organization needed in horticultural activities demanded stability of social groups. Author's emphasis on "warfare" is mainly in support of the theory presented by Ember and Ember (1971). These authors have demonstrated that wherever there is "local" warfare or conflict people are likely to maintain solidary kin groups of males through patrilocal residence and patrilineal descent. The presence of patrilineal kinship organization in Naga hills area appears to have been influenced by the prevalence in the past of local warfare. The village

endogamy has been the most dominant feature of the entire Ao area following the same reasons. According to villagers' own statements almost all the marriges are village endogamous. However, village endogamy is simply a strong preference instead of rule at present.

The Ao Naga believe that by establishing *ritual kinship* (between individuals or families) they can expand and modify the social and political ties among social groups. The purpose of ritual kinship was mainly to develop political alliances and economic ties among these people.

The ritual kinship guides wide range of relationships over many villages. But within one's own village and even within one's own *khel* (clan-territory) the ritual kinship can be established. By establishing ritual kinship two individuals in Mokokchung village call each other as *temba*. One cannot have two *temba* within one village because whenever there will be killing of an animal a particular portion of meat has to go to one's temba who can only be one at a time. But it is easy to have a ritual friend in another village who will be called as *akang-temba*.

When two clans from two villages form ritual kinship alliance it is termed as *tinu-ongtsu* (mongsen) or *tinu-jungshi* (chongli). The ritual kinship alliance between two villages is termed as *mimetong*. Any male individual will address to another clan member who is not his agnate as *kuti*. One may observe that even the whole Ao Naga tribe had established in the past, through inter-village ritual kinship, hereditary friendship with the neighbouring tribes such as Sangtam Naga. The other forms of ritual kinship are as follows:

Temba tinu : Under this category the members of one particular clan can establish 'friendship' with the members of the same clan in another village. The word *tinu* also denotes brotherhood. Whenever members of the 'brother-clan' from another village visited (the two such villages must have been on friendly terms when the conditions

of head-hunting and 'warfare' prevailed in the past in whole of Naga hills), the visiting people were honoured with a communal feast.

Akang tepba **:** This is a type of friendly alliance which is set up between two rich men belonging to two different *kitong* (clans) from two different villages. All attempts during the life-time are made by each of these two rich men to defeat another in the field of material prosperity. Each of them will invite his counterpart for a communal feast known as *akang-aksu* in which the visiting friend, *atongpo,* has to show his capability in consuming the largest quantity of meat and other articles served by the host in a competitive spirit. This friendship continues from one generation to another in hereditary manner. This represents a unique exchange system.

Tinu jungshi **:** This ritual kinship of brotherhood also has its roots in the historic past when there prevailed organised warfare at local level and at inter-tribal level. By establishing this particular kinship alliance the members of two clans from two different villages were bound in the past to help each other in attacking a neighbouring tribe. Even today those who maintain this alliance visit each other's village two times in a year. *Tinu* means brother hence it is different from the *Temba-tinu.*

Tepo-ja **:** By the very process of clan-lineage segmentation the population will divide and the new satellite villages will be set up. All such satellite villages will maintain cordial relations with their "parent-village". As a token of respect the tribal councils *(tata-menden)* of each *khel* or clan of parent village will receive some gifts like *dao* (a large knife) and ornaments, etc., from the satellite villages. Ritually the satellite village members are denoted as *asenchir* or 'children' (see Das, 1983a).

Ao Councils of the Elders

The whole tribe among the Ao was never united under one political head. J.P. Mills reported that in old head-hunting days loosely knit leagues gave the tribe a certain amount of political cohesion. However, Mills himself recognized that the real political unit of the tribe is the village.

The political organization of the Ao village is based on two main principles. First, the whole village is divided into *Zungas* or age groups (*yingar-in* in Chongli and *yengar* in Mongsen) to which various communal duties are assigned. Secondly, the control of affairs lies with a council, whose method of election and tenure of office vary in different villages. There is nothing corresponding to an hereditary chieftainship. The council of village elders is called *tatamenden*. The Ungma village is considerably big in size and the entire village is territorially divided into two sections known as *mupu*. *Mupu* are also called as *khels* since the British time. Each of these *khels* or *mupu* select thirty-five members for the council. The chief of the council of village elders is called *Ongre* who is generally taken from the *Pongen* clan of the village. Hence, the office of *Ongre* appears to resemble like an hereditary chief. The Ungma village council, *tatamenden*, has seventy members in all, and all the clan groups, *kitongs*, are represented through these members.

In Mokokchung village, on the other hand, each khel has its own *putumenden* (council of elders) and the council of Yimpang khel is the biggest in size in the village. There are six *tate-menden* in the village and Chongli and Mongsen dialect groups have three such councils each. Even now such village councils function. Their main task is to maintain customary laws and regula-tions for social and political administration of the entire village.

Since the office of the Ongre, the chief of

the village council, is recruited by men of a particular clan one can trace the existence of some kind of internal stratification within the tribe. The position of the chief, however, invòlves the prestige rather than the power.

Among the Aos the most important instrument of government is the council of *tatamenden*, which is a *democratic* gathering of elders. This council consists of members from all the clans-lineages of the village. Political functions are, however, not performed only by this council, ritual kinship also plays important role in the political domain. In the sphere of inter-tribal relations we observed that the ritual kinship and political relations are one and the same entity. Since small local groups of the clans always lived as isolated, self-governing units, they could always independently establish ritual kinship and political alliances with similar units of other neighbouring tribes. Age-sets among the Ao are of great political significance. The age-sets cut across the clan boundaries and form the framework of *political integration* at wider territorial levels.

We have noted that among the Aos the members of the same clan are scattered widely in Ao land. Ao villages are heterogeneous in their clan composition. However, there is certain superiority attached to a particular Ao clan, *pongen*, a senior male member of which exerts a little greater influence in the council of elders. Such individual member of the *pongen* clan also receives special tributes, particularly at the time of communal feast, from the members of the whole village. For all their fierce egalitarianism there is thus a significant element of stratification in Ao society.

Naga Chieftains, Headmen and Middle Class

Among all the tribal communities of North-East India the Naga tribes are probably given the maxi-

mum liberty to pursue their own traditional customs and customary laws. This may be seen in the existence of the 'Nage-tribal-courts' in all the district and other administrative headquarters of Nagaland. The *Dobhashis* (the Naga interpreters) are recruited by the government to work in court and, therefore, these courts are better known throughout the Nagaland state as *Dobhashi-courts*. The proceedings are carried out in these courts strictly in accordance with the Naga customary laws, and the non-Nagas are also tried in these courts if a breach of law is found to have taken place within the Naga territory.

The offices of *Dobhashi* and *Gaonbura* were originally established by the British. But today these offices have been standardized throughout Nagaland to maintain the general law-and-order. While *Dobhashis* are to adjudicate in their courts, the *Gaonburas* are the main adjudicators and peace-makers in the villages.

The traditional Naga chiefs (such as *Ang* among the Konyak and *Awunga* among the Tangkhul Nagas) are also duly recognized and they are, therefore, to play important roles in the field of mechanism of social control in their respective villages. Among all Nagas probably the Konyaks have the most effective hereditary chieftainship. The most characteristic feature of the Konyak system is the inter-village marital links of the clans of the different *Angs*.. The principal wives of the Angs are taken from the chiefly clans of other villages. The Ang of Chui takes the girls of the commoner *(Tualem)* clans of his own village as his secondary wives. But the less important men of the Angs clan marry the girls of the commoner clan of the village as their only wives. Same is the case with all the men of commoner clans, who follow the lineage/clan principles and village endogamy. During his recent visit to Konyak region Furer-Haimendorf observed that the supreme position of the Angs which they maintained for generations by the

careful arrangement of politically relevant marriage-alliances between the lineages of the highest rank, is no longer secure.

Traditionally the Ang, sacred and sacrosant, exercised great authority not only in his village but over several villages. This author has collected the names of more than twenty such villages which are under the control of the Chui Ang. But within a village it is always the clansmen who are closely tied in the social field.

The Angamis of Viswema and other villages even today have the council of their elders *(pithima)* at different levels of clan (khel; thenu) and village (razou). The *Gaon Buras* are the government nominated representatives of the clans/khels of a village. It was the Britishers who introduced in Naga hills the institutions of the Gaon Bura and Dobhashis, which continue to function even today in whole of Nagaland. Dobhashis were actually 'interpreters' but gradually they became custodian of customary laws and the British administrators sought their help while giving judgement on the matters related with village disputes. In recent times, however, these Dobhashis have their own 'tribal courts' in circle and district Headquarters and settle all the matters in conformity with various Naga customary laws. Except serious criminal cases they are entitled to take up all categories of cases, either coming to them directly or through the 'courts of the village elders'.

The Ao Nagas, on the other hand, have a highly elaborate village council composed of elders *(tatar)* representing clans and kindreds for fixed periods. It is reported that after their retirement some of the embers *(tatars)* become *putir* (priests). Again, in some places there are *'zungas'* - a body of persons belonging to same age group under *Putu-Menden.*

But under the impact of Christianization many of these institutions have acquired a new shape. Change in the ritual base has, however, not altered

the age-old structure of authority in Naga villages. At the same time, it cannot be denied that a new 'educated elite' is emerging whose members are being nominated to the formal bodies like the 'village council', 'Area Council', etc., which are introduced by the administration. The emerging tribal middle class gives no importance to ritual-kinship base of society. Intra-tribe and inter-tribe exploitation and confrontation have intensified and spread. According to this new administrative set-up, which is common to all parts of Nagaland, each village has a village council which consists of the nominees of the clans and the Gaon Buras (Headmen). In Konyak region Ang is an ex-officio member. Each 'village council' elects one representative to 'Area Council'. Though the whole idea of such selections for wider areas is new to the Nagas but as regards the actual recruitment we find that it follows the traditional mode of kinship principles.

Inspite of these ongoing changes the real unit where the 'social ties' are formed is the clan. A family is member of a clan and its social, economic and political interests are bound up with the interest of that clan. Even the institutions like Gaon Buras, Dobhashis and formal 'councils', to a great extent, coincide with the traditional framework of social/political structure.

In fact the outside forces such as Christianity, the introduction of education and lastly impinging the new administrative system on the community could not affect the Naga political structure to any great extent. The villages are still Naga villages. The village continues to be recruited internally, by descent, and villagers live within 'clan-boundaries' where their ancestors lived. Members are related to one another by agnatic descent. The clans never lost their political functions. Only as a clan-man and an agnate do one has a right to land in the village; village, that is a political arena. Relationships within the clan,

which is localised one, are expressed in these institutions: Exogamy, ownership of clan-land, ward-settlement, labour organization, clan-courts and councils, etc.

The village continues as a political arena and a political community. Administration never became a 'rival' political system, but, in the whole working of the Naga political system, the Administration has become an important 'outside factor'.

The chieftainship is an age-old institution among the Tangkhuls. The chief is called Awunga in Thankhul dialect which is an equivalent to English word 'king'. In every village there is an hereditary chief. In rare cases, there are two or more chiefs in a village. In his study, Hungyo (1978) found that in Bungpa, "there are two chiefs representing the two clans of the village. In exceptional cases, the leaders of the clan groups, during their migration period, agreed to settle down in a particular place without submitting the leadership. In such cases, the leaders of the respective groups maintained their identity, and hence we find two or more chiefs in a village. There are many big villages with several clans which have one chief each. Therefore, the number and size of the clans in a village are not the criteria for having two or more chiefs in a village".

The Tangkhuls strictly follow 'patriarchal' and patrilineal system and, therefore, the chieftainship passes on from father to the son. If the chief has no male child, the nearest male kin succeeds him. Under normal circumstances, it can never be transferred to any other person. In case the chief dies without male child and the next man who would succeed him is mentally retarded then a person from the same clan may perform the burial ceremony of chief in a befitting manner and may become the chief. He must be a man of dignified character who is acceptable by the villagers. In no cases the society allows the succession by the women (Personal communication, P. Hungyo).

Hodson (1911), in *Naga Tribes of Manipur*, writes "Divorce is a rare occurrence among the Tangkhuls. Barrenness and adultery supposed and proved are main reasons of divorce. The divorced woman can always bring her case to the village court and the chief with the help of the councillors gives its verdict according to the customary laws and its precedent. If a woman divorces her husband on flimsy ground, she should be fined double of the bride price paid to her parents and she cannot take anything with her from the house of her husband. "The case of theft is a rare occurrence and the individual found stealing is severely beaten and the article stolen is restored to the owner" (Hungyo, 1978).

The Manipur Village Authority under the Hill Area Act, 1956, gives protection to the traditional system of village administration though some changes are made. The village headman is the ex-officio chairman of the Village Authority under the Act. The Subdivisional Magistrate has control over the Village Authorities under his local jurisdiction. It is the duty of the Village Authority to maintain law and order and for that purpose exercise and perform the powers and duties generally imposed on the police under the Police Act, 1961; so, still the customary laws are in practice in the context of village administration and the 'Awunga' maintains the law of the land.

Defining the Tribe

Our discussion so far has in general revealed that the 'tribe' is an *uncentralized* authority system. In a tribe several social units are integrated by a number of pan-tribal factors. For example, such integration is provided by kinship groups that unite people in separate bands or communities, or age-grades or associations that cross-cut kinship or territorial boundaries as we described earlier.

Each tribe consists of one or more small autonomous units; these may then form alliances with one another for various purposes. The political system of the tribe is informal and of a temporary nature. Whenever a situation to defend all or several small tribal groups arises, they join to deal with the situation in a cooperative manner. When the problem is satisfactorily solved, each group then returns to its autonomous state. Headship among tribes is also informal. Local leader is generally a man respected for his age, integrity and wisdom. Group decisions are made on the basis of public consensus.

In many tribal societies the organizing unit and seat of political authority is the clan. Within the clan elders or headmen are responsible for regulating the affairs of members and represent their kinship groups in relations with other kinship groups. The elders may form a council that acts within the tribe or for the tribe in dealing with outsiders.

Tribe as a Segmentary Non-State Polity

Another form of tribal kinship bond that provides political organization is the segmentary lineage system. Political organization among segmentary societies is usually informal, there are neither political offices nor chiefs, although older members may exercise some authority. In the following example of the "Zounuo-Keyhonuo" or the Southern Angami Naga people we shall describe the structural and jural aspects of a segmentary, stateless social system.

The ethnographic studies conducted by the British anthropologists, particularly since 1940, have provided us with new set of abstractions, new theoretical concepts and new techniques of fieldwork. Work in African ethnography are thus immensely valuable. The lineage system is found to be the focus of analysis in these studies. Evans-

Pritchard and Meyer Fortes (1940) have shown that the lineage system is the morphological framework of stateless societies, and that this system interlinks many categories of social relations. Max Gluckman (1963) believes that " . . . the students of segmentary, stateless polities have posed more fruitful problems of political structure than the far more numerous workers on highly organized states".

Here we shall make an attempt to critically examine the question of defining a 'tribe' as a true group in anthropological perspective. With the help of case study of the Zounuo-Keyhonuo the relevance of the model of the 'segmentary social system' will be discussed. The data used here have been collected from the village of Viswema in Southern Angami area. Most of the discussion that follows and the material that author produces here are from his Ph.D. Thesis (see Das, 1985a).

Definition of "tribe" in anthropological literature has remained complex and controversial for a long time. It is only in recent years that serious attention has been drawn to this issue by the anthropologists. Contributions of Fried, Sahlins and Service in this matter are of great significance. These authors, more particularly Fried, have been concerned with the problem of tribe as a necessary stage of political evolution and its relevance to the contemporary world (Fried, 1968; Sahlins, 1961; Service, 1962).

Fried remarks that "however a tribe be defined, it should be in terms of an aggregate and not of a group, although expectably rare cases may be found in which a true group exists". To treat a tribe as a social group suggests that all its members would have to interact or at least participate in a theoretically interacting structure. Following Morgan's original thought Fried directs his attention to identify the tribe as a "necessary and logical stage", and points to the political dimension in

defining the tribe. Thus, in view of Hogbin and Wedgewood, the question of political unit in defining a tribe was not seriously examined earlier (1953). These authors, therefore, find relevance in the definition of tribe given in the 1951 edition of *Notes and Queries in Anthropology*:

> "A tribe may be defined as a politically or socially coherent and autonomous group occupying or claiming a particular territory".

In the same edition of *Notes and Queries* one reads that

> ". . . there may be no supreme tribal authority; and the political unity of the tribe emerges only in co-ordinated or collective action, by the more or less independent sub-divisions of the group each under its own elders on special ceremonial occasions or in opposition to enemies".

Fried in his review does not accept all that has been said and proposed by Sahlins and Service. Fried, unlike these authors, notes that the same bounding mechanisms exist for band and tribe and that most of the so-called tribes seen at close range to be curious melanges rather than homogeneous unit. Thus Fried argues that tribal names are proteanly flexible through space and time and probably have always varied situationally as well. He also comments that

> ". . . most tribes seem to be secondary phenomena in a very spacific sense; they may well be the product of processes stimulated by the appearance of relatively highly organized societies amidst other societies which are organized much more simply. If this can be demonstrated, tribalism can be viewed as a reaction to the formation of complex political

structure rather than a necessary preliminary stage in its evolution. It is abundantly clear that there are important social aggregate usually called tribes . . . these are the "tribes", so-called, which spring up in colonial situations" (Fried, 1968).

The Angami and many other Naga peoples such as Sema, Lotha, Ao, etc., are "tribes" which are found to have been created by colonial situations. Members of Naga tribes show considerable similarity in culture, language and also in physical type. Whatever sense of ethnic unity the Angami Naga possess is however a response to experiences, events and conditions of the recent past. The sense of common Angami identity for the first time developed from a common rejection of alien British overlordship. The sense of common "Naga" identity also emerged under the same conditions which were created by the "outsiders" ("the British", "the Indian plainsmen").

A careful examination of the 'colonial ethnography' and literature produced during the colonial period suggests that no attempts were made towards proper classification of true ethnic units. The British used tribal names, sometimes value-loaded ones, to identify those groups of people, who in most cases, did not represent the "true tribes". Most of these tribal names were later accepted by the people on politico-administrative grounds. Such names were originally coined by the outsiders such as the neighbouring plainsmen. The self-names of the natives were thus neglected. The situation in the Naga Hills remained most complex since small groups occupying distinct territories formed politically coherent and autonomous "tribes". This is why we find that ambiguity pervades in the use of ethnic labels of "Angami", "Ao", "Lotha", etc., to distinguish different Naga societies.

The ethnic label of Angami, for example,

is a corruption of the name "Gnamei" coined by the Manipuris. Hutton was probably forced to use this alien label of Angami to avoid the issue of ethnic classification in such a complex situation. The fact that a separate tribe named as "Chakhesang" has been formed by that group of people whom Hutton (1921) referred as the "Eastern Angami" raises relevant questions. Whether or not people consider themselves as belonging to a single group (among Angami) thus appears ambiguous because it differs from one group to another. Hutton (1921) himself has drawn linguistic (*i.e.* dialectical) boundaries between distinct groups such as *Tengima* (this group was considered by Hutton as the genuine Angami and his book *The Angami Naga* chiefly deals with the customs of this group), Chakroma, Chakrima, Dzunokehena (Zounuo-Keyhonuo) Memi (Mao) and Kezami. These separate groups of Angami did not ever act together in any context in the past. At the same time these groups never had marriage alliances. Thus historically all Angami do not comprise potentially or exclusively interactive network; what is more, some Angami interact more frequently and regularly with some adjacent non-Angami than they do with Angami. Thus the Viswema villagers, in the past, had marital alliances regularly with the neighbouring "tribes". The Angami people therefore, emerge as an "aggregate" rather than a "true group". The distinct "groups" of Angami are thus considered as different "tribes" for analytical purpose. It is found that all the non-Tengima Angami people have their self-names and are of different orders. The people who are to be described below consciously identify themselves as Zounuo-Keyhonuo. The use of this self-name is quixotic and is based on the particular circumstances in the history of the group that led them to adopt this label. One significant factor is that all component villages of Zounuo-Keyhonuo group are intimately tied by a single large genealogical structure.

The legends and traditions suggest that before the establishment of "peace" through British 'occupation' of the Naga Hills the distinct smaller groups of a Naga tribe acted as mutually hostile groups. The colonization ended the relative isolation of the scattered and autonomous tribal societies, brought them within one administrative set-up, policy and programmes and put an end to the institutionalized hostility between distinct groups by abolishing warfare, feud, blood-vengeance and head-hunting.

The tribal settlement pattern in the Naga hills always remained such that distinct Naga tribes are distributed in the area with clear-cut boundaries between them. There never existed strong central authority at the maximal tribal level. Antagonism was not confined only between distinct segments of one tribe, at village level also inter-clan feuds were common. The ethnic-identity in the past was thus highly segmented and diffused territorially which had meaning and reality mainly in terms of political opposition. Only large genealogical structures, such as we find among the Zounuo-Keyhonuo, thus provided the true tribal unity. This must have been an effective device for mobilising people at various levels of conflicts at inter-tribal and intra-tribal levels.

Anthropologists generally use the term "segmentary" with reference to several types of social systems, but the essential features must be the 'nesting' attribute of segmentary series, as Barnes has suggested.

The Segmentary System of the Zounuo-Keyhonus Naga

My studies in southern Nagaland force me to believe that the segments of the lineages *(sarra)* and the clans *(thenu)*, defined by the actors both socially and territorially (in Zounuo-Keybonuo

society), are essentially articulated in segmentary systems. The village of Viswema, where the intensive fieldwork was conducted by the author for over six months, forms the largest residential territory and it has been internally broken down into four distinct, bounded and permanent territories which are inhabited by the four clans of the Viswema village. Every clan is thus exclusively anchored to a particular locality, each such clan-territory being static for several generations. Within each clan-territory each of its component lineages is also anchored to a particular locality.

The society is composed of lineages which are recruited by unilineal descent. Lineage is a single group that is permanent and which is represented *vis-a-vis* other such groups by its elders. The term *thenu* is used to denote both the social unit of the clan as well as the territorial segment of a district. In the Zounuo-Keyhonuo village of Viswema we find four *thenus* all of which have their own proper names. Author's enquiry suggests that these names are actually those of the apical ancestors. If the wider genealogies of the clans are examined we find that a clan is divided into a number of lineages; and in their turn, lineages are divided into a number of segments which may be called as sub-lineages (these also have their proper names), but these are of regularly diminishing order of segmentation. Thus tracing through genealogy we find that each segment is divisible into several segments which are themselves organized only through genealogically-based segmentary processes till we come to the lowest level of the family segment. At the maximal level all Zounuo-Keyhonuo villages are genealogically articulated within a pyramid like structure through a segmentary framework only, at the top of which are placed the "Zounuo" and "Keyhunuo", themselves considered to be the original tribal ancestors.

The lineages provide the conceptual framework

of the political system but the structural significance of the clan is also great. A lineage is a corporate group with a formalized system of authority. A lineage is a single group that is permanent, to which definite jural rights and ritual duties are attached. Between the lineage and the tribe is found that unit of a structure which author calls a clan.

The term *thenu* is used to denote both the social unit of the clan as well as the clan-district. These two units of "clan-district" and "clan" are found to be the most significant units and that they do in fact operate in that system, the former as the largest precisely known territorial unit and the latter as the largest precisely known structural unit.

A clan could easily be defined as a single unit only in terms of the politico-ritual contexts. A clan, in the past, always emerged as a single peace-group and was united for war or self-protection against a common enemy. Every clan was, however, subject to the authority of its senior male members whom author calls as elders or headmen. At every level of segmentation age is the criterion to attach certain powers. There exists also an age-grade system and thus generation seniority is determinable. It is the seniority which confers authority. The secular and ritual powers and authority of these elders have not been altered by the modern administration. At the same time these tribal elders exercise judicial and executive authority through the backing of the administration.

We saw that a great confusion of nomenclature exists in the British ethnographical records to classify the Naga people. Author has shown that the term "Angami" never formed a true group. Under the name of Angami even those people were included during the British period who are now known as "Chakhesang", and who form a completely distinct tribe in the administrative parlance today. But the people such as Zounuo-Keyhonuo are not recognized as a separate group by adminis-

tration. It does not mean that these people do not retain their separate identity. It is not ony a developed consciousness of their cultural uniformity that gave rise to a tribal name but it is also the traditionally perpetuated sense of unity of the Zounuo-Keyhonuo villages, with strong suport of a genealogical framework, which has been a major factor re-enforcing the true tribal structure and character of this group.

Idioms of Kinship-based Authority and Laws

The patrilineal descent is the vehicle of the continuity and stability of the Zounuo-Keyhonuo social structure. It is the men who hold the reigns of authority, direct economic life, control the political organization and guide the religious thought and actions. There are many facts within the context of family which have politico-jural implications over a much wider area. Only a physiological father of a person, for example, is considered his or her real jural father. All children (not excluding the women) before and after their marriage remain under the ritual and jural authority of their father. Despite economic separation at marriage the father bears the essential jural responsibility for all the wrongs *((Kemeda-dwe)* committed by his sons. However, certain jural autonomy is always acquired by a married son in the sense that he enjoys clear-cut rights over certain property items and over his wife and children. These are what Radcliffe-Brown (1950 : 127) termed as "possessive rights over persons". Thus the rights of a Zounuo-Keyhonuo man over his wife as his sexual partner as well as his household partner, rights over children as his protegee and protegee are well recognized.

The main source of power and the emerging pattern are derived mainly from rules and ideas of incorporation. The idiom of kinship with its primary distinctions of generations, age and sex

provides symbols both for socialization of young members and for maintenance of order. By and large within the framework of the family the relationships are influenced by the sentiments. Subordination and superordination are, however, essentially based on seniority of birth and are, therefore, jurally very significant. This is further re-enforced through the status of different individuals in different *thechu* or age-sets. The lineage, clan and village level councils of elders are also formed through this age-set system. It is, therefore, we could draw a distinction between authority structure based on relationships of the parent-child, and the authority structure based on relationships amongst the kinsmen within and beyond wider social groups, outside the framework of the family.

The principle of "the social equivalence of siblings" (Radcliffe-Brown, 1930-31) is the key to the social relations of siblings in Viswema village. The siblings derive their social equivalence, that is, equivalence in jural, ritual and economic relations, as opposed, for example, to private marital relations, from their common relationship with their parents. However, after the death of the father, the first-born male child takes over the father's roles as head of several families of the siblings.

Ideas concerning property among the Zounuo-Keyhonuo vary according to the nature of the property and the type of ownership right involved. Both the individual and communal rights over the things prevail. Clear-cut distinctions are observed between types of property, the types of rights that could be exercised over such property and the rules governing the exercise of such rights, and finally the types of groups and individuals that may exercise these rights. The Zounuo-Keyhonuo term *puckinyi* denotes property of any kind, movable or immovable, but for each specific property item also there is a distinct term.

All villages in Zounuo-Keyhonuo territory have their distinct boundaries which are generally always

demarcated by natural streams or rivulets. A village area contains terraced and *jhum* fields, fallow land that has ceased to be cultivated only comparatively recently; and land covered with bush or forest. A direct question about the rights in a particular stretch of forest will always produce a specific answer. In theory there is no land without an owner and every villager has some land for use. Further there is no villager who owns land in another village.

In their rugged mountain country the Zounuo-Keyhonuo have practised wet-rice terrace cultivation for centuries, besides slash-and-burn cultivation (or *jhuming)* which plays the role of an economic auxiliary. They grow many crops but the rice is the staple food. At the same time the people greatly depend on the forest produce collection and hunting. The terraced wet-rice cultivation is done on the flat land where water is plantiful and manageable to be led to and away from the fields, without difficulty. In those forest areas where the terrain is not suitable for construction of terraces the *jhuming* is done on a limited scale.

One important aspect of the Zounuo-Keyhonuo economic system is the construction and management of traditional irrigation channels called as *dzuye*. Every stream and rivulet is captured and water from these sources are led through different channels to distantly located fields. The water flows down from one terrace to the one below, and a complicated system of water rights governs the distribution of water. The share in a *dzuye* may be acquired by way of inheritance or the same may be bought in exactly the same way through which one could purchase a field. Nocturnal theft of water, by illegitimate tapping of the dzuye often causes disputes. A dzuye may be very big or small in size and depending on its size it may be owned individually by a single family or jointly by several families, such families need not be related through kinship links.

There are areas in and around Viswema village where for hundreds of feet the hilly slopes are divided into terraces, some are narrow strips and some as wide as twelve to fifteen feet. Supported by walls of pebbles and plastered with mud each terrace field has some source of natural water supply or man-made water channels *(dzuye)*. The water flows down from one terrace to the one below. Change in ownership of dzuye or in any such transaction it is necessary to declare in public about the changes of ownership to avoid any future dispute. A group of several families enjoying rights over a particular *dzuye* is called as *dzuye dzuvako* and it is the responsibility of all its members to see that the *dzuye* is regularly repaired and safeguarded from all kinds of danger.

The irrigational water that is drawn from any source (or stream) becomes in the course of time itself the subject of all sorts of rights, rights of purchase and item of inheritance. It is illegal to break the traditional jural arrangement of distribution of irrigational water drawn through any source. No user can divert the flow to his new fields without consent of the other users of a *dzuye dzuvako*. Even to slightly divert the traditioal direction of flow of water to other field-sites is regarded as illegal and at the time of all such actions the consent of the elders of the *dzuye dzuvako* is must.

The forest areas *(ketse-sokha)* could be owned and exploited individually and collectively. Forest areas are of various sizes and are named differently. One particular *sokha* may have one owner or several families may own one *sokha*. At the same time some forest area may be owned either by a lineage in the shape of *kayie* property, or a particular clan may own a particular forest area. At the same time there are vast areas of forest which are collectively owned by the whole village. Besides *jhuming* the forest is used to collect building materials for dwelling houses, fire wood, a large number of edible leafs and honey.

The use and exploitation of forest areas are guided by distinct tribal customary laws and the jural authority exercised by headmen over such forest areas are supported by the Nagaland Jhum-*land* Act of 1979. One often quoted dispute in Viswema has been that between two kinsmen Pulhosa and Tsupa of Zerima clan. The dispute is about unauthorised use of water from the *dzucho* (a small water channel) by Tsupa. The clan elders met and resolved the dispute by stating that "since in the past Pulhosa's father had taken oath about right over Zakaje (the stream over which the *dzucho* was built) there should not be any dispute over the same". Since the elders' verdict was not agreeable to Tsupa, he took the case to Jakhama Dobhashi court. However, in Jakhma court also Tsupa could not do anything since Pulhosa took an oath in the name of several kinsmen about the truth of his claim. Thus Tsupa lost the case. This example shows not only the victory of customary law based verdict of the village elders but also the great significance of the custom of administration of oath in dispute settlement. Some more examples shall be examined below.

Dispute Settlement through Peaceful Means and Customary Laws

Law, whether informal as in simpler societies, or formal as in more complex societies, provides a means of dealing peacefully with whatever conflicts develop. Societies in North-east have various ways of peacefully resolving disputes. Community action is one such way of resolving disputes. Among the Sangtams of eastern Nagaland community action is the chief mode of dispute settlement. In majority of tribal societies of this region there are informal adjudicators who resolve trouble cases, although such adjudicators do not have strong formal power needed to enforce their decisions.

Among the Zounuo-Keyhonuo of Southern Nagaland disputes are more easily settled by the use of an informal adjudicator called as "chapimi". This man is not a political chief but a specialist mediator. His position is different from the headman called as *pithimi*. Men like *chapimi* are to be found in many tribal societies of North-east India.

The Oaths and Ordeals

Yet another way of peacefully resolving disputes is through *oaths* and *ordeals*. Both oaths and ordeals involve appeals to supernatural power. An oath is the act of calling upon a deity to bear witness to the truth of what one says. An ordeal is a means used to determine guilt or innocence by submitting the accused to dangers of painful tests believed to be under supernatural control.

Among the Bangnis the oaths and ordeals are the traditional methods of determining the guilt or innocense, and cases of petty theft are very frequently settled by means of oaths. The practice of making the accused pass through some ordeals is now rare, the Bangnis of the younger generation have not witnessed any in their life.

The Bangnis have a firm belief in oaths and that is why petty cases are always settled by this means. When something is stolen the owner of the property privately approaches the suspected culprit and tries to persuade him to return it. The former, however, must have sufficient grounds for suspicion, otherwise it creates bad relations between the accused and himself. If the accused person denies it, the complainant informs the villagers about it, whereupon the villagers ask the accused to prove his innocence by oath. If the accused person cannot prove his innocence by the recognized method of oath, he will have to compensate for the lost article. If the accused agrees to take the oath, a day is fixed for the

same. On the appointed day the accused takes the oath in the presence of the elderly members of the village.

The procedure for taking the oath is as follows: The medicineman *(Niebu)* utters incantations at the time of taking the oath. The accused person bites a tooth of the tiger saying, "If I am telling lie the tiger will kill me". Similarly oaths are asked to be taken by placing a bit of earth in the mouth of the accused who uttrs, "If I am telling lies, I shall go inside the earth". If the oath is performed by taking rice in the mouth, it is supposed that the performer will become poor.

The ordinary oaths are resorted to only in cases of theft. In cases of adultery and other sexual offences, oaths are taken near a sacred stone. In Betgarh village of Bangni region there is a small upright stone under a tree which they call Sori. No villager defiles the areas near the stone nor does any one point his finger at it. They believe that there resides in that stone an evil spirit called Sori. In case of sex offences one has to take the sori-dingdung oath here (Saikia, 1964).

There are common forms of oaths practised by the Bangnis. They have a firm belief in the efficacy of oaths as means of determining the innocence or guilt of persons, and informants are convinced of the evil consequences of false swearing.

Ordeals are rarely resorted to by the Bangnis. In the past in all murder cases and cases of theft of extremely valuable articles (Tibetan bells and beads), ordeals were resorted to (Saikia, 1964 : 29). There are two forms of ordeals among the Bangnis, one is *chudung-dingdung*, and other one is called *rocdor-dingdung*. First ordeal involves proving one self by inserting the hand into boiling water (it is believed that boiling water does not injure an innocent person). The second ordeal involves touching the red-hot piece of iron. It

is believed that the red hot iron burns the hand of the guilty alone, whereas the innocent does not even feel the sensation of heat (Saikia, 1964 : 29).

Among the Garo, oaths and ordeals perform important functions. In view of Milton Sangma (1985) the Garo villages were always politically independent and all quarrels and disputes were settled by convening "meetings" of all the heads of families of the village. Although the head of clan, called *Nokma*, conducted the proceedings of such meetings, "decisions were made after thorough deliberations of the whole assembly. . . . the Nokma would never try to press forward is views and opinions". Before the plaintiff was asked to state his case, the defendant to reply and the witnesses to give evidence, they were first required by custom to take an oath before the assembly. "The Garo oaths are very long and consist first of declaration of the truth of the coming statement, and then of calling upon the speaker all the worst evils that can be imagined should he speak falsely"(Playfair, 1909 : 75).

One way of taking an oath was by standing on a stone which they salute first and then by their hands joined together looked on the joined hills calling upon their god in most solemn manner to witness whether their declaration was true or false. After that they touched the stone again with the utmost fear, and by bowing to it once again called upon their god (John Illiot, *Asiatic Researches*, Vol. III, 1792, quoted by Sangma, 1985). Other ways of taking oath included placing a tiger's bone between the teeth, or taking oath by biting a tiger's tooth, which implied that "if I have spoken falsely may my death be caused by such a tooth as this (Playfair, 1909 : 75).

When an oath had failed to have any effect on the oath-taker and all evidences could not be adduced, the assembly met again and trial by ordeal was resorted to (Sangma, 1985). One

kind of ordeal was known as *"Sil So'a"* or ordeal of hot iron. According to this, a piece of metal is brought to the blacksmith, to whom a small fee is paid for heating it. When the iron is red-hot, he administers an oath to the person to be examined, and informs him that no harm will come .to him if he had sworn truly, but warns him of the consequences of a lie. The person who is to undergo the ordeal then stretches out one hand before him, with palm upturned. The priest lays upon it some pieces of cotton, and above that some jack tree leaves, and on the top of all, the red-hot metal. The man is made to close his hands and the hot iron is then drawn to it (Playfair, 1909 : 74).

Moral Values and 'Self-Help' in Acephalous Societies

Among the Zounuo-Keyhouo if the peaceful compromise *(Kezekevi-zhonu)* could not be reached then to establish the fact of the case oath is taken by the parties concerned. The Zounuo-Keyhonuo consider an oath to be *"opi onu teta zo sheri phoswe (eswe) le ketasa tso te we"*. This means let there be small or big case, if one has taken an oath to prove his innocence the matter is decided.

Since the polity and kinship interpenetrate in the acephalous Zounuo-Keyhonuo society author has tried to separate the personal and sentimental sphere of kinship from wider kinship/descent group based politico-jural arena. We have touched the cosmological belief systems in these societies only casually, though they play significant role in maintaining social order. Among the acephalous, segmentary, non-state people such as Zounuo-Keyhonuo political system survives to a great extent through the "dogma" of kinship principles and dependence on supernatural sanctions derived by 'elders' through the sacred character of their office. It is in them therefore as 'legitimate autho-

rity' all the powers of adjudication are vested.

The main-spring of the power of the elders and headmen in these societies rests on their ultimate capacity to dominate public opinion. One of their basic tasks is to give expression to a public opinion reflecting both 'moral' and legal/jural values which link them together. In a non-state society the application of moral duties and law-enforcement is a matter of individual self-help.

FIVE

ECONOMIC DIMENSIONS OF SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

IN tribal life the principal links for the whole society are based on kinship. Lineages, clans and other social groupings tend to be the main corporate units, and "they are often the principal units for land ownership, for economic production and consumption" (Mandelbaum, 1970 : 576). This sort of land-clan nexus is generally singled out by the anthropologists as the main differentiating feature between 'tribe' and 'jati' (see Bailey, 1960, 1961). In case of almost every tribal society of North-East India kinship plays important role in economic sphere. In North-East two sharply distinct adaptive patterns - shifting cultivation *(jhuming)* and settled wet cultivation are observable. While in the hills areas the *jhuming* shapes a sort of 'primitive' agricultural/horticultural life, in the plains areas the much advanced settled cultivation forms the dominant economic structure. Ethnic-distribution-wise the tribes, in general, live in the hills and the non-tribes live in the plains villages. Several tribal peasants (such as Bodo group of tribes) also live in the plains areas.

There has generally been a tendency among the tribal people of the region to live comfortably in their forest, hilly areas. But this should not be treated as a matter of pure isolation. There were several instances of culture contacts, and at the same time we find that the tribal individuals did venture even in remote past to come down

to plains-market places. The tribesmen of the region may be classified as (1) Pahariya or highlanders, (2) Tarai or boundary line (foothills) residents, (3) Datiyal (the foothills dwellers), and (4) Thatiya, the plains-settlers and settled cultivators.

In terms of mode of production probably the Sutiya are the most backward people of the region since they still mainly depend on hunting and food gathering (Mahapatra, 1982). The Aka people have, however, adopted wet cultivation because of their long contact with Assamese plainsmen. A vast plateau has always inspired the Apa Tani to take up terrace cultivation on a large scale. The Apa Tani, like the Angami Nagas, make extensive use of irrigation channels. The Apatani raise a large varieties of paddy locally called as 'plare', 'plate', and 'ploupiny' (early ripening variety), empu, elany and rack, collectively called as 'emo', and it is this variety "which forms the bulk of the harvest and constitutes their chief food reserve" (Furer-Haimendorf, 1962 : 16). Mode of production in some foothills areas has been mixed one, either in Nagaland or in Arunachal Pradesh. People in such areas practise both jhuming and wet cultivations.

The *Provincial Gazetteers of India* reported about eighty years ago that the economic organization of the area "is of a very simple character, and the great majority of the population are supported by agriculture. In the hills and in the Assam valley the ordinary cultivator builds and repairs his own house, makes his own agricultural implements, has his clothes woven at home, and in fact supplies almost all his own simple wants". The occupations returned in 1901 were divided into eight main classes. The percentage they formed of the total population is as follows (Table 5.1).

Table 5.1 makes it amply clear that the economic organization of the people of entire region was of a very simple character. From the same source we come to know that in the region the

TABLE 5.1 : **Categories of Occupations**

Sl. No.	Name of occupation	Percentage
1.	Government Service	0.6
2.	Agriculture and Pasture	84.5
3.	Personal Services	1.2
4.	Preparation and supply of material substances	7.8
5.	Commerce, Transport and Storage	1.4
6.	Unskilled Labour (other than agricultural)	1.8
7.	Means of Subsistence Independent of occupation	1.3
8.	Actual Workers (including women involved in agriculture)	35.0

agricultural implements were all of very primitive character, which included a wooden plough with an iron-tipped share, wooden rakes and mallets, a rough bamboo harrow, sickles, bill hooks, knives *(dao)* and baskets. The principal crops, which are till this day being raised, were rice, pulse, sugar-cane, mustard, rope and tea. Jute, tobacco, several kinds of plaintain, vegetables, pan, areca palm, pepper and variety of spices were also grown. The Khasis have been known for exporting potatoes, oranges, pineapples, and leaves of bay-tree. As regards manure it is observed that cowdung and sweepings of the courtyard were used to manure garden crops, sugar-cane, jute, and the nurseries in which rice seedlings are grown.

Much agricultural development and economic diversification has since taken place in whole area, including the tribal areas of the region. In Chapter 7 we have described about major economic developments taking place in all states of North-East India and the roles, achievements, prospects and problems of the tribals in the same field.

It is generally believed that the tribal economic systems are basically self-sufficient and that these are subsistence economies, lacking 'specialized roles or hierarchical relationships'. The material available with us on several economic systems of the tribes of this region suggests that the 'colonial ethnography' had failed to understand the sociological dimensions of rural economy. Aspects of cooperation, re-distribution, kinship, exchange, trade and innovations were neglected. Among the people of North-East "these economies are not always based n the presumption of sheer survival" (Das, 1984a). It is also a well-known fact that the old accounts on tribal communities of this region paid no attention to the question of unequal shares of resources in tribal social structures, and emergent social stratification. Several examples could be cited from this region to highlight these facts. Chapter 7 on political systems in this volume also deals with these facts.

In this chapter we are mainly concerned with the economic aspects which highlight, in close relation to social and political structures, the patterns of inequality and social stratification. We shall do this with the help of several case studies and discussions thereon.

The main source of livelihood of the Hmars, for example, was agriculture. Shifting cultivation was the age-old mode of production and forest constituted the main source of several products, particularly timber, teak, fir, pines, sal, oak, bamboo, etc. Now-a-days the Hmars practise settled cultivation beside shifting cultivation. According to Lal Dena (1977) "internally the economic activity of Hmars was marked by the absence of market-oriented production. The process of distribution took the form of gift and counter-gift and ceremonial exchange and the distribution involved channeling upward of products and services to socially determined allocative centres such as chiefs, priests, and blacksmiths". At the same time the

Hmars had trade relations with Cacharis, Bengalis etc., and the main items of exchange were cotton, chilly, and later on orange and pineapple, which were exported in large quantities mainly through the Barak river.

According to Lal Dena (1977), "as the Hmar society became more stable with settled agriculture as the mode of production, the position of chiefs became more and more deep-rooted in the society. Each Hmar village possessed a definite area of territory". It is assumed that (at some stage) the communal ownership of land was the basic feature of the land tenure system among the Hmars and that it is the common property of the people; and the chief and the councillors are trustees with the power to see to the rightful use and distribution of land to each househead for cultivation (Pudaite, 1963 : 51). The actual practice, however, presented a contrasting picture. The chief of the Hmar village was a 'Maharaja of a petty state' (Pudaite, 1963 : 39). He was, in fact, the sole owner of land, and his right can almost be compared with that of a Zamindar in other parts of the country. The villagers were something like tenants-at-will who paid *busung-sadar* and rendered forced labour to the chiefs. The *busung-sadar* is the practice of paying every year of certain specified quantity of rice and of surrounding the forelegs of every animal shot or trapped within the chiefdom as rent and 'rendered forced labour' which involved building or re-building the chief's house and any other services whenever asked for without any wage (Lal Dena, 1977).

During 1977 and 1980 author studied several villages of the Southern Angamis. It is found that the lineages are the basic economic units of the Southern Angami social system that emerge in corporate activities. The segment of *sarra* (lineage) is defined primarily by the canon of agnatic descent and all politico-jural and religious offices are vested in particular lineages. Lineages are anchored to fixed territories. Besides individual

land-holding, the *kayie* category of land, forest and water channels *(dzulye)* are owned and operated by a lineage. Lineage is thus corporate and jurally autonomous. Age-set system provides mechanism for informal recruitment of headmen called as *pithi* (or *gaonbura)* - as author described at length in earlier chapter.

A person among the Southern Angamis (or Zounuo-Keyhonuo) could achieve the status of "Zhodimi" (equivalent to *pithi)* by accumulation of surplus paddy, cattles and rice-beer and their re-distribution through giving away several communal feasts in a complicated series as author described in earlier chapter. These are ranked in these orders: (1) Tem-za, (2) Zhotho-Keda, (3) Zhotho-Kehi, (4) Zhotho-Tsusu, (5) Ezade, and (6) Zhotho-Tsu. Similar situation is also reported in Ao Naga society (see Das, 1983). The values which these people put upon their food do not consist simply in its capacity to satisfy hunger. The notion that tribal economy is merely for subsistence thus gets refuted. The Southern Angamis are always conscious to attain the status of *pithimi* and to accumulate more food and cattles, in order ultimately to give more than what is received in the 'exchange' (feast-transaction) to outface a rival in public esteem. It is, therefore, we can say that maximization of material statisfaction is not the ultimate goal in this tribal society (see Das, 1983 and 1985).

The above two examples of the Hmar people and the Naga people exhibit two extreme forms of economic and political systems. While among the Hmars exists an unequal allocation of goods and power based on social classes, among the 'democratic' southern Angami Nagas, on the other hand, any person may acquire the prestigious position of a 'big-man' by giving a series of communal feasts. Among the Hmar the formation of chieftainship had drastically affected the land occupancy system in general. The strata to which the Hmar

Chiefs belonged was the strata of despotic rulers. The 'bigmen' among the Zounuo-Keyhonuo could form within their egalitarian polity the higher strata of noblemen with wealth, prestige and power.

These examples of the Hmar and Southern Angami have delineated the elements of social stratification which could be derived from within the individual social structures, by institutional means. These examples highlighted the indigenous socio-economic processes, formation and developments. The exogenous economic processes and factors have drastically affected the economic networks and social relations in many tribal areas of North-East India during last few decades, and thus they have paved the way for growth of definite social stratification and inequality in tribal societies. In support of this point of view we shall examine below the impact of exogenous socio-economic processes among the 'Tengima', the western Angamis.

The western Angamis were studied by author in Zubza village in the year 1976-77, under the national project 'Tribal Economy' initiated by Dr. K.S. Singh in Anthropological Survey of India (see K.S. Singh, 1982). In latter visits of author to Zubza, and other Angami villages, he discovered that the processes of social stratification, peasantization, landlessness, increase in the number of wage-earners had been further intensified. Infact, the establishment of CRPF camp and other agencies have completely changed the face of Zubza today, after twelve years of author's first visit.

According to 1971 Census Zubza had a population of 362 persons, of which 274 persons belonged to the Scheduled Tribe. Zubza is 15 km away from Kohima town. Because of its being located on the Dimapur-Kohima Highway, with its large sized flat fields, the village has attracted the neighbouring populations. The principal Angami inhabitants of this village do not originally belong to the village. Coming from the neighbouring

villages they have now settled down here in order to make a better living by the terraced cultivation. Zubza is slightly *atypical* in that it is not an old Angami village with its traditional characteristics. The Angami cultivators of nearby villages, which fall within a distance of 8 km such as Khonoma, Jotsoma, Sechuma and Mezoma, etc., have been customarily occupying the lands of Zubza and, in fact, many families still control and manage the Zubsa terraced fields from their own villages. In addition o terracing, *jhuming* is also done by some families. *Jhum* yields are quite lower than the yields of terrace fields and with the financial and material assistance of the Soil Conservation Department and the Agriculture Department people obtained very good yields.

Zubza farmers can be classified into three groups: (i) big land owners (terrace and orchard), small land owners (terrace and *jhum)*, and (ii) landless labourers. Almost all villagers own some land and all make efforts to increase their holdings and develop them into terraced fields.

Able farmers use both organic and chemical fertilizers, which is part of government sponsored innovation. Staple food is rice and whatever surplus is available is sold to 'middlemen' for distribution to nearby markets.

Besides terracing and jhuming, hunting and jungle produce collection are also done in the village. After agriculture the most important commercial activity in the village is weaving, done by women. The thread required for weaving is procured from the Kohima and Dimapur markets.

Customarily the Angamis of this village have the individual right in land. The control of land by *Khel* in this village is found to be less because no such system existed in the village in the past. There are many cases of land transfer through sale but these are limited to the Angamis only. The majority of purchases are made by the progressive farmers of nearby villages such as Sechuma,

Jotsoma and Keruphema. It is these immigrant farmers who have made use of improved technology in recent years. They have also attempted to construct terraced fields for which they got the labour from Zubza. In the whole process 'cash-money' has played an important role nd the required investment on the part of individual cultivators demonstrates the break-up of the traditional system of exchange. As at earlier times, the traditional barter system still pays role in the interior high-hill Angami villages.

Zubza is also somewhat unusual in that it has accommodated the members of the other ethnic groups such as the Sema and Chakhesang Nagas, northern and southern Angamis and he Nepalese, most of whom have now acquired some cultivable land. Introduction of advanced technology requires capital investment and entrepreneurial activities which the villagers have amply exhibited. Land is changing into a commodity and land transfer on a considerable extent in last one decade has created a sort of *land market* in this part of Naga hills.

Before the Second World War the Dimapur-Kohima road began to be built in the vicinity of Zubza and this gave an opportunity to the villagers to be employed as unskilled labourers. In Zubza and nearby villages some Angamis came forward to act as contractors. After independence, this process moved further and the village received the benefits of the government sponsored agricultural programmes alongwith opportunities for work on construction and so on.

In Zubza the economic response was quick. Men such as Siromi Angami (Chairman, Area Council) had shown keenness to grow surplus for sale, which is, in fact, a result of the flexible economic system in which the Angamis have been living. These people have developed several hectares of orchard land in Zubza. The new items now being produced are ginger, sugarcane, orange,

lemon, etc. which are becoming the main source of earning money.

The traditional, political and social structure based on close interaction of *Khels* (the clans and lineages) is losing its importance. To this one may link large scale occupational mobility occurring under the impact of educational and economic development. Besides more and more area being onverted into terraced fields the area under orchard and cash crops of local importance is also increasing; and area under irrigation and double cropping has also increased. There are a good number of households getting loans from private and bank sources.

Naga villages which are predominantly agrarian are linked with the outside world in various ways. There are regional differences but they are of degree rather than of kind. Because of forest environment people supplement their cultivation activities with collecting forest produce, hunting, fishing and animal husbandry.

However, the Angami villages, such as Zubza, pursue terraced rice cultivation with new cash crops somewhat more systematically and get better yield. The people make use of bullocks and plough, and they also employ fertilizers and advanced techniques of agriculture.

Clear-cut differences based on wealth are now emerging in some areas on account of various factors such as steady transformation in quantity and quality of land, dependence on orchards, and new cash crops. Various ways to diversify ways of earning money and increasing participation in the larger market economy by people, are a result of direct impact of macro economic processes on traditional subsistence economy.

Zubza is not a self-sufficient village. Being located near a town villages of this kind have been depending on urban centres. This relationship, and other factors such as a characteristic peasant division of labour within the household, with specia-

lists who supply basic non-agricultural requirements are important prerequisites for classifying these villages as examples of peasant society. A peasant society is one composed primarily of people who make their living by agriculture and who live in symbiotic interdependence with market towns or urban areas though living away from them (Kroeber, 1948; Redfield, 1957). A peasant household is characterised by a nearly total integration of the peasant family's life and its farming enterprise (Shanin, 1971).

Each type of agricultural technology carries with it differences in social structure and cultural pattern, which in turn are responsible for varying degrees of social and economic change. The Naga peoples' efforts had been directed towards meeting their limited needs but many of them have supplemented their new needs in various ways. Money, which was introduced during World War II in this society, now plays a dominant role in daily life. The balance between population size and land resources which existed in the region one generation ago has been upset. The paid employment in government services by a large number of Nagas, and the wages of these men and women represents an entirely new network. The money flowing into the villages, such as Zubza, has led to the investment in agriculture by enterprising villagers which is resulting in growing stratification and economic differentiation outside the realm of kinship and descent system.

Land Ownership System in North East India

Most of the tribes of the region continue to hold their traditional occupancy rights in land and forest areas. Prior to Independence of India the land tenure system in the hill districts of Assam was guided by Regulation V of 1886 (Chin Hills Regulation, 1896). At present under constitutional safeguards and protection, in all tribal areas of

the region, the occupancy rights have generally been retained in favour of tribals, though in some cases the rights of chieftains have been abolished. We shall now discuss the patterns of land ownership prevailing in the States and Union Territories of Northeast India. Mizoram has since been declared as a State and the Arunachal Pradesh enjoys the status of Statehood.

Arunachal Pradesh

The Jhum Land Regulation promulgated by Government of Assam in 1947 gave customary rights to tribals over their land (village-owned, community owned and individually owned). According to Elwin (1959) "each family acquires rights over the plots which it had cleared, the title of which passes to their male descendents, and in the course of time each has a number of such plots, in different places within village area". Thus the individual ownership or, more properly, individual rights to use such land did exist in the society. Theoretically however, all land belonged either to the clan or the village. Cultivable land for *jhum* purposes falling within the village limits is distributed by the village authority to the different clans inhabiting the village. The clan then re-distributes it. At the time of migration of a house-hold from a village its land right reverts to the same clan and on failure to re-distribute it to the clan members land rights finally go to the village authority. Of many tribes of Arunachal the Khamtis have an unique method. Among them "the whole community tills the land on cooperative basis. The chief owns the entire land, individual ownership is not generally recognized but separate areas might be assigned to different clans and sub-clans" (Chowdhury 1975 : 264). The land ownership system may be described as divided into three types, (1) village ownership, (2) clan ownership, and (3) individual ownership.

Assam

In the past zamindari and raitwari systems had prevailed in Assam. Between them also other systems had developed. According to one report of 1952-53 there were 81,22 lakh acres in plains division and 1.48 lakh acres in hill division. These were divided into different categories of estates. The intermediaries were however, abolished in the State by the Assam State Acquisition of Zamindari Act, 1951. Share tenancies were protected and regulated by the Assam Adhiars Protection and Regulation Act, 1948. Ceilings on land-holding were fixed by the Assam Fixation of Ceiling on Land Holding Act, 1956, which was applicable largely to plain districts of Assam. The Assam Land and Revenue Regulation (Amendment) Act, 1964, made sincere beginning to restrict alienation of land belonging to the scheduled tribes of Assam (Agarwal, 1983). Most of the Tribal areas are, however, not cadastrally surveyed (see Chapter 7 also).

Manipur

The Manipur State Hills People Regulation, 1947, indicates the pattern of ownership of land whereby right to cultivate crops is recognised in the Hills areas. The land tenure system in the hills is governed by the customary laws of the respective tribal populations.

Meghalaya

Among the Khasis the land belongs to people, but there are certain categories of land which are communally owned, and certain category of land are privately owned. *Ri-kur* category of land belongs to clan. No part of this land can be alienated without the consent of clan-durbar to person falling outside clan framework. *Ri-Raj* or *Ri-Syiem*

lands are for the support of the Syiem or Chief's family. Members of society using such land are to pay a tax to Syiem and thus a sort of owner-tenant relationship exists. *Ri-Lyngdoh* lands fall under jural authority of priests. *Ri-law-Kyntang* lands are *sacred groves*, situated near summit of hills. These are village property which had ultimately helped to maintain ecological balance in the area. *Ri-kynti* are private lands which have either been acquired by a man or a woman individually, or in case of woman inherited from her mother. Ancestral landed property are essentially owned by women.

In Jaintia Hills, lands are generally irrigated paddy lands or high lands. Irrigated or *hali* ands are sub-divided into four groups, *viz.* (1) Raj land belonging originally to Jaintia King. Later the British annexed these lands and put under permanent land revenue and periodic leases were issued to the land holders, (2) Private land which have never been put under land revenue, (3) Service land has been the category of land which belonged to the Administrative Officers such as *Doloi*, and (4) Village Puja-land were revenue-free land and belonged to *Doloi*. As regards high lands it may be mentioned that these were subdivided into private land with same type of tenure s *hali* lands and unclaimed lands or government waste lands. It may be mentioned that customary laws, with minor changes, continue to regulate land relations among the Khasi and Jaintia. These are further re-enforced through District Councils in their respective areas.

In Garo hills, following old customs and laws, land belongs to the wife of the *Nokma* (village headman). *Nokma* is considered as proprietor, who has the right to dispose of land for a particular purpose, but with the permission of wife and her *machong*. The community has vast areas in which individual families may have right to use. *A'Khing* land are community land under lineages. We have discussed this point at length in Chapter 3.

Nagaland

In Nagaland community ownership of land as well as individual ownership is widely recognized through several acts and regulations. Under special provision in the Constitution of India, Naga tribes generally have full control over land and forest areas whose management and exploitation is regulated strictly by traditional methods. Assam Land and Revenue Regulations was applicable in a small area in Dimapur under Assam administration. No cadastral survey for other areas are done properly. The Jhum Land Reguition Act of 1970 is a revision of earlier Act whereby Naga people have legal control over land and forest. In some areas where chieftainship prevailed, such as Konyak area, the chief continues to have traditioal pattern of ownership over entire area. It is his duty to see that every family is allotted the desired plots of land for cultivation (see Das, 1982d).

Tripura

As early as in 1931 "some land area in Khowai Sub-Division was reserved for settlement of five groups of people, purana-Tripuri, Noatia, Jamatia, Riang and H-alem. Land alienation was made an offence. The Tripura Land Revenue and Land Reforms Act, 1960, also prohibits transfer of tribal land to the non-tribals, without the permission of the Collector. However, without any sale deed many land transaction cases have been reported" (see Agarwal, 1983).

Mizoram

Prior to formation of the District Council, on whose recommendations the institution of chieftainship was abolished by the Lushai Hills (Acquisition of Chief's Rights) Act of 1955, each village was practically a separate area ruled by a *Lal* (chief).

The chief was the owner of the land within the village territory and he used to distribute land for cultivation to the heads of the families of the village. After the abolition of the chieftainship "all rights and interests in land vest absolutely in the Government, and the administration of land was passed to the Lushai Hills District Council and subsequently to the village councils. The land is thus under common ownership and where individual families have separate holding" (Agarwal, 1983).

The Plains Rural Economy

The agricultural calendar of an Assamese plains village is normally set like this:

1. Preparation of seed beds and ploughing of fields for *sali* paddy - April-May.
2. Harvesting of *ahu*, broadcasting of seed and ploughing, manuring *sali* field - June-July.
3. Transplanting of sali paddy - July-August-September.
4. Domestic work, repairing of fences - Septemeber-October.
5. Harvesting of *sali* - November-December-January.
6. Preparing fields for *ahu* paddy - January-February-March.

In plains Assamee villages *Ahu* and *Sali* are normally the two main crops. Now-a-days improved varieties of paddy are also tried. In general there are a number of landless people and it is possible only for a few families in each village to sell a good quantity of surplus in the market.

The rural economy of Assam has always been based on agriculture. But there are instances when on account of new forces of change significant occupational mobility is taking place in many areas now. But at the same time there are areas

in Assam, such as the Karbi tribal areas, where most villages studied by author were hit by poverty.

The family is generally everywhere the basic economic unit. In agriculture both men and women take part. While ploughing is exclusively done by the menfolk, transplantation is mainly done by the women. Harvesting is done jointly by men and women. Thresing is normally done by men and husking is done by the women. All people between the age of 15 years to 60 years are required to do some job in the agricultural operations. In Assamese villages weaving plays an important role. Weaving of cloth is must for every woman. Many families rear silkworms of endi and muga. Muga worm is reared when the pressure of agricultural operations is less. (Aspects of economic change in Assam are described in Chapter 7).

The Economy of the Hills Areas

While the settled cultivation is practised in plains areas, shifting cultivation or Jhum cultivation is the way of life of the people in hill areas of Northeast India. It is an agricultural practice evolved as a reflex to the surrounding ecology. It is noted by Jha (1976) that about 426,900 hectare of lands are under shifting cultivation in Northeast India. Table 5.2 demonstrates it more clearly.

It is found from Table 5.2 that a large number of people are engaged in shifting cultivation in whole of North-East India. The process of shifting cultivation comprises the following main stages:

(*a*) Selection of spot for cutting trees and shrubs.
(*b*) The process of cutting trees and shrubs in the spot.
(*c*) Burning of plant material.
(d) Cultivation on spot for varying number of years depending on ertility of soil.
(*e*) Abandonment of this spot in favour of a fresh spot.

In shifting cultivation implements, such as digging stick used for planting seeds, are all of very crude nature. It is a labour-intensive techinque with extensive use of land. This is why the carrying capacity of shifting cultivation is quite low. *Jhuming* is undertaken in the hilly and undulating land mostly covered with bamboos and other secondary growth. Generally in November the land is selected by the community on the basis of rotation of fields. During dry winter months, from December to February, the forests on the selected patch are cut jointly or severally and left to dry. Before the onset of the monsoon in early part of April, the dry debris are burnt. After a shower or two

TABLE 5.2 : **Extent of Jhuming in North-East India**

State/ U.T.	Area under shifting cultivation (in ha)	Total population dependent on shifting cultivation (in '000s)	Percentage of total population dependent on shifting cultivation (1971) to total population of respective State/U.T.
Arunachal Pradesh	70,300	270	57.69
Mizoram	60,000	260	80.74
Meghalaya	76,000	350	34.58
Manipur	50,000	300	27.95
Nagaland	83,600	Not Known	Not Known
Tripura	17,000	100	6.42
Assam Hills Districts	70,000	403	0.48

TABLE 5.3 : **Eco-Cultural Background of Some Ethnic Groups of North-East India**

State/Union Territory	Tribe/Ethnic Group	Ecology, Terrain	Economy	Degree of Cultural Development	Social/Political Structure
1	2	3	4	5	6
Nagaland	All the Naga Tribes (Angami, Rengma, Zeliang, Ao, Konyak, Phom, Chakhesang, Sangtam, Khemingen, Yimchunger, Chang, Lotha & Sema). Tangkhul is the major Naga tribe of Manipur. The 'Zeliangrong'	The Naga Tribes in general occupy the mountainous region of Nagaland & Manipur. There are some stretches of low land; plain areas.	Chakhesang Angami, Terrace cultivation. All other Jhum cultivation. Tangkhul Nagas of Manipur are also expert terrace cultivators.	About 80% are Christian. Southern, Central and Western Nagas have generally adopted Christianity in large number. Some of the Manipur Nagas are also Christians. All Nagas still practise animism. The Zeliangrong Naga are the followers	Traditionally the various Naga tribes were at enmity with one another. The head-hunting was practised previously, but such head-hunting and inter-village feuds came to an end due to the strong action taken by the Government and the Preachings of the Church Mission. Morung (bachelor's dormitory) was existing in the villages. In the Morung there

tribesmen are scattered in Nagaland, Manipur and Assam	of Heraka religious cult.	were boys of different age-groups. Each age-group had definite duties of its own. At present Church appears to be the most important centre for the community life in the village. The villages are divided into 'Khel'. The members of each 'Khel' are supposed to be descended from a common ancestor, whose name 'Khel' bears. Detailed analysis of chieftainship, headmanship, bigmanship and segmentary political-social systems of Naga tribes is provided in the chapter on "Political Systems" in this book. The clans of

Contd. . .

TABLE 5.3 : *Contd...*

1	2	3	4	5	6
					Ao are arranged in phratries which are widely scattered. There are moieties among the Angami, Khiamngan and Zeliangrong Nagas. Most Nagas do not have hereditary chiefs. The Konyak and Sema have chiefs in the villages. In general the village andogamy is practised. These groups are patrilineal and patrilocal.
Assam	Bodo Kacharis (Sonwal, Barman and Mach Kachari)	They live in the Brahmaputra valley (Lower Assam, Darrang, Lakhimpur and	Most of Kacharis have permanent, wet agricultural fields.	Those who live in the plains have adopted Hinduism, but also maintain their own system of beliefs and	There are 13 clans reported among the Kacharis and certain clans among these are functional in nature. Their state system has been described in

	other areas of Assam).	practices. They are very proud of their culture and language which they are trying to revive.	chapter four. There is a section of the people among the Bodos who call themselves 'Soronia' i.e., purified Kacharis, to indicate that they have adopted the customs of the Hindus and abstain from forbidden food. Some of them call themselves as Kayasthas. The Barman Kacharis wear sacred thread. They are patrilineal and monogamy is usually practised by them.
Dimasa(Kachari) A section of	North Cachar Hill district and	They practise both	Majority of them are Hindus. A	They practise the system of double descent. The

Contd. . .

TABLE 5.3 : *Contd...*

1	2	3	4	5	6
	Bodo Kachari	in the plains of Cachar district in Assam.	shifting cultivation and wet cultivation.	small number has been converted to Christianity. 15.35% Christian among the Dimasas.	male trace their descent along the father's line or Sengfong, while the female children reckon their descent alongwith their mother's line or Jaddi. In both the cases besides their primary affiliation, they also feel affiliated to the mother's clan from which a marriage is avoided. Monogamy is generally practised. Clans are exogamous.
	Karbi (The erstwhile Mikir)	The Karbis live in the Hills of Assam in the Karbi Anglong district.	In the hills they live on Jhum cultivation. Many are now adopting settled	They believe in a number of gods which according to them have special relationship with the	The tribe is divided into four segments, viz., (1) Chintong, (2) Rongheng, (3) Amri and (4) Dumrali. These are again divided into various exogamous

		agriculture.	life of man 7.79% are Christians. Large number of Karbis are now Hindus.	groups or Kurs. There are five major Kurs. They are patrilineal, patrilocal & they usually practise monogamy. The village Durbar plays important role in the village politics. At the macro level a Karbi state had existed, about which we have given a detailed analysis in this book in chapter four.
Meghalaya	The Khasi, The Jaintia.	The Khasis live in the Khasi hills of Meghalaya, the Jaintia live in the Jaintia hills.	Those who live in the hill top practise shifting cultivation and those who	47.43% are Christians and 49.37% follow Khasi religion.	The Khasis have the following sub-divisions:(i) The Bhoi (living in the north), the War (living in the South) and the Lyngam (Living in the

Contd. . .

TABLE 5.3 : *Contd...*

1	2	3	4	5	6
			live in the flat land practise terrace cultivation. Now-a-days potato is cultivated as cash crop in large scale.		West). Those who are living in the plateau land are called Khasi. Those living in the Jaintia Hills are called Pnar or Synteng. The following social divisions are found: (a) The Royal Clan known as Syiem, (b) The priestly clan known as Lyngdoh, (c) The Minister. clan and the plebian clan. There is a definite order of social precedence among the clans; but inter-marriage between them is not banned by any precise social injunction. They are matrilineal. The Khaddu, or

				the youngest daughter inherits the property in most cases. Rule of residence is matrilocal. The youngest daughter is the custodian of the family property and performs the religious ceremonies. The village Durbar plays an important role in their political life. (For details see chapters three and four in this book).
The Garo (Koch, Rabha, Hajong and Lalung)	The Garos are living in the Garo Hills of Meghalaya and also in	Land is communal, generally shifting cultivation is practised.	Their traditional religion provides a benevolent creator. Christianity is follow-	The Garos are divided into 13 sub-sections based on dialects. There are five clans (Chatchi). Each of these clans is sub-divi-

Contd. . .

TABLE 5.3 : *Contd...*

1	2	3	4	5	6
		the adjoining plains area of Goalpara district of Assam. Koch and Rabha are neighbours.		ed besides Garo religion. Koch, Robha & Lalung are now mostly Hindus.	ded into machong and those are divided into large number of local lineage groups. The other institution is known as mahari which performs inheritance of property, marriage arrangement, dissolutions of family, funeral rites etc. They are matrilineal in descent, inheritance and succession and matrilocal in residence. Though matrilineal, males hold actual authority over socio-religious and economic matters. The household property goes to 'nokna', a heir-

					ess daughter, selected by her parents. The Koch, Rabha, and Lalung tribes have adopted patriliny. For detailed theoretical discussion on this subject see the chapter Three on Social & Descent Systems.
Arunachal Pradesh	1. Nishi, 2. Adi, 3. Khamti, 4. Singpho, 5. Apa Tani, 6. Sulung and others.	These tribes are living in the Subansiri, Siang, Lohit, Tirap, Kameng & other districts of Arunachal Pradesh.	Nishi, Adis and Singphoes who are living in the foothills have taken up settled cultivation, side by side practise shifting cultivation. The	The Adis and Nishis believe in malevolent and benevolent spirits whom they propitiate with sacrifice. The Khamties and a large number of Singphoes are the	The Adi includes a number of tribes, Miniyongs, Padams, Pasis, Shimongs, Boris, Ashing, Gallong, Bokar and Pallibes, Each Adi group is divided into a number of clans. The Adis are a democratic people and each village has a council called 'Kebang',

Contd. . .

TABLE 5.3 : *Contd...*

1	2	3	4	5	6
			Khamtis live on plough cultivation. Most of other tribes are shifting cultivators.	followers of Hinayana Buddhism. Recently some of the Adis of foothills have embraced Christianity.	whose head is not hereditary. Moshup or bachelor's dormitory is an important social institution which is used as a sleeping house by all young men and for holding different types of Kebang meetings. These groups are patrilineal & patrilocal. Generally monogamy is practised. The Gallong have some form of fraternal polyendry. The Nishi tribe is divided into three major divisions: Dol, Dopum and Dodum. Each division is further divided into a number of

phratries and clans. They are patrilineal and patrilocal. The Khamti are considerably advanced tribe and are having their own script. They have the chief system with several ministers with specific functions to do. The differents activities of the villager are controlled by the chief in consultation with the ministers. They practise cross-cousin marriage and mother's brother's daughter is preferred for marriage. Monogamy is the principal form of marriage. They are patrilineal and patrilocal.

Contd. . .

TABLE 5.3 : *Contd...*

1	2	3	4	5	6
					The Singphoes are also divided into a number of clans. There was chief system among them. They are patrilineal and patrilocal. The cross-cousin marriage from mother's line is practised. They are generally monogamous. The village elders take the important decision. Raja (Chief) is also recognized.
Tripura	Tripuri	60% of Tripuri live in West Tripura district of Tripura. They live in Hills	Both settled agriculture and jhum cultivation practised.	They mainly follow Hinduism (including Vaisnavism). Tribal priests (ochai) and Brahmans	Belonging to Bodo group, they had once ruled the whole state. They are divided into 12 occupation based groups. The lineages are exogamous.

		& Plains.		are employed.	Plains and Hills men do not intermarry. Their political institutions are described in chapter on the Political Systems.
Manipur	Hmars	They are found in Mizoram and Manipur.	Shifting cultivation has been an old method. Nowadays they are mostly settled cultivators. They had inter-tribal trade relations. They had market	Many of them are now Christians. In original religion a priest of Ngurte clan had the ritual dominance.	Hmar society is divided into 23 namedpatricians which are localized. These are furtherdivided into 210 lineages. Clan exogamy is observed. The bachelor-dormitory (Sier) played important role in social system. The Hmars have centralized chieftainship. Among the Hmars the younger son inherits large share of

Contd. . .

TABLE 5.3 : *Contd...*

1	2	3	4	5	6
			relations in the plains areas.		property but in leiri changsan and khawlum clans the elder sons enjoy greater rights. Both nuclear and extended families are found.
Mizoram	Lushai or Mizo is dominant group. Others include Lakher, Poi, Pawi, Hmars,etc.	Most of them occupy hilly regions	Lushais do terrace cultivation. Most others jhuming. Forest-produce collection hunting, and fishing done by all the tribes.	Lushais or Mizos are mostly Christians. Chakmas follow Buddhism traditionally. The Church plays important role in socio-cultural and religious life.	Most tribes (Lushai or Mizo and Pawi) had strong chieftainship in the past. Village councils or chainhnakin now maintain social order. Customary laws are generally recognized. Political institutions of the Mizo and other groups are described elsewhere in this book (see chapter four).

ash settles down and the field becomes ready for sowing. The entire area is divided among the households. Soil is never ploughed. A large variety of crops are grown in the same field. Harvesting starts from the third month and continues up to December next. Thus a complete cycle of activities is over for the field of 'first year'. A new plot is selected for cultivation for the next year. The field used for a year may be left to forest fallow or cultivated with one or two specially selected crops. Occasionally some residual crops are collected from the abandoned fields. An attempt is made in Table 5.3 to describe the salient features of socio-cultural life of some ethnic groups.

Case Study of the Karbis of Assam

Author had studied the social anthropological aspects of the Karbi tribe during 1983-84. The Karbi tribe is mainly concentrated in the Karbi Anglong District of Assam. For a long time the Karbis were known as the Mikirs and their district was known as the Mikir Hills district. The Governor of Assam, in exercise of the powers conferred by a clause of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India, had changed the name of 'The Mikir Hills District' to 'the Karbi Anglong District' with effect from the 14th October, 1976. Under the same constitutional provision the "Autonomous District Council" for the Karbi Anglong District was constituted. Under the Assam Reorganisation (Meghalaya) Act, 1969 the government also invested this District Council with greater autonomy, and thereby the functioning of the development departments in the district has been placed under the administrative and financial control of the District Council with effect from the 1st June, 1970. The establishment of the District Council is done to enable the tribal people to develop according to their own way.

The Karbi Anglong district is situated within

the Assam State and it is bounded on the east by the Dhansiri river which separates it from Nagaland and Sibsagar district of Assam, on the west by Meghalaya and Nowgong district of Assam, on the North by Nowgong and Sibsagar districts of Assam, and on the South by Meghalaya and North Cachar Hills district of Assam.

The Karbi Anglong district is divided into two main regions, the eastern landmass is known as Diphu Sub-division and the western landmass is known as Hamren Sub-division. The present description is based on data collected from the villages in the Diphu Sub-division. Geographical area of the Diphu Sub-division is 7297 sq. km and that of the Hamren Sub-division is 3035 sq. km. About 70 per cent of the total geographical area of the district is hilly. Several rivers such as Dhansiri, Kopili, Jamuna, Kaliani and Diyang criss-cross the district.

Besides the Karbi, the Dimasa Kacharis, the Nagas, the Kukis, the Lalungs, the Garos, the Khasis and the Bodo-Kacharis also live in the district.

The total population of the district as per 1971 Census is 379,310 (tribal 210,039, and non-tribal 169,271). District has witnessed a phenomenal growth rate. Decade variation between 1951 to 1961 is 71.21 per cent and between 1961 to 1971 is 68.28 per cent. The estimated population of 1981 is 5,99,000. Density of population per sq. km in 1961 and 1971 has been 22 and 37 persons respectively. Percentage of literacy as per 1971 Census is 19.17 and average annual rainfall is 1371.50 mm.

The fieldwork for the present study was carried out in some selected villages of the Lumbajong and the Howraghat Development Blocks. The Karbis live in small villages. Some villages consist of only three or four families who are generally related by kinship relations. Since it was required to locate and study one hundred families from

the so-called *cculturated* area, and another one hundred families from an isolated area, it was decided to choose five small villages from Lumbajong Block and three small villages from Howraghat Block to do the needful. The names of the villages are:

A. LUMBAJONG BLOCK

1. Chutianala.
2. Sarthe Ronghang
3. Siding Teren (a)
4. Rongkangthir
5. Ram Inghi.

B. HOWRAGHAT BLOCK

1. Siding Teren (b)
2. Bakulia
3. Era gaon.

While the selection of these villages was done mainly to collect demographic and socio-economic facts from 200 Karbi families in two locations, the collection of detailed ethnographic facts, which are reported here, was done from the village of Rongkangthir in Lumbajong Block. Collection of all kinds of data was done through interpreters. About 2 months fieldwork was done in the area. Necessary help was taken from the Assam Government to carry out the work. Shri P.B.S.V. Padmanabham had accompanied the author for covering the physical anthropological aspects of Karbi people.

Although historically the Karbis had the system of their own statehood, conceptualized and organized through kinship based social structure, they never enjoyed the status of a warring tribe. Lyall (1908 : 152) noted that "surrounded by warring tribes, and still nomadic in their habits of cultivation, they have from time to time found it necessary to place themselves under the protection of stronger peoples". The general apathy prevalent

among the Karbis towards the cultivation may probably be explained in the context of their nomadic value systems, which has direct bearing on their economic backwardness.

The Karbis have always preferred the migratory/shifting type of settlement and their villages have never been older than a period of length of two generations. The villages are small in size which are always named after the name of the living founder and, therefore, soon after the death of a village-founder either the village will move to a new place in the dense forest or the people may stay in the same village for another generation. In latter event the village will be renamed after the name of a new leader or the son of the original founder. On account of this frequent change of location a hill Karbi village has never been a true geographical unit, fixed on landscape. These villages could, therefore, be called as 'nomadic settlements'. Although attempts have been made by the government to 'stabilize' and to 'group' these shifting settlement areas, and to induce a concept of "village system" in the area, only partial success could be achieved (Das *et al.*, 1983). This factor naturally causes great hurdles on way of planned and integrated rural development.

When the Karbis choose a particular area of forest, the trees and bushes are cut down to a certain extent, allowed to dry and then set on fire. In the land which is thus prepared, seeds are sown in several holes dug on that land or they are broadcast. Every job is done by human labour. Used continuously for three to four years such land which is not replenished by manure (except the ashes) gives a diminishing return. The general backwardness of the Karbis originates from such 'primitive' agricultural practices.

Simple tools and implements such as digging stick, *dao* (large size knife), bamboo sorapor, sickles and bamboo baskets are the main items of production system in *jhuming* of the Karbis.

The process of *jhu ning* starts with cutting the jungle through *dao*. Big trees are always left out. Male members do most of the job of cutting. The jungle is then left for drying and the same is then burnt out. Burning of jungle is called as *ma-kakai*. There will be further growth of grass, etc., which will be weaned again. Sowing will be done during February and March. By the month of July the paddy plants will be ready. This .s the middle stage of the production process. The crop shall be cut during September. By November the crop shall be brought to and stored in specific places. The Karbis have their months divided according to specific jobs, as described in Table 5.4.

The 'extreme backwardness' of the Karbis becomes more apparent if one observes that collection of bamboo-shoots and tubers from jungle for consumption remains a dominant aspect of the tribal life, as indicated in Table 5.4

Not only that the production aspect of the economic life is primitive in character the very nature of ownership and management of land is basically without economic reasoning. Since the villages were never permanent settlement areas no specific demarcations were introduced to carry out the job. The power of distribution of land for cultivation to individuals and families have been vested either in 'headmen' (present day government nominated gaon-buras) or the council of village elders. On account of non-fixity of tanurial rights, the cultivators have little attachment to the land they operate in most areas of the district (Das, 1984a).

Certain pattern that emerged during our field-work among the Karbis is like this. The Karbis normally form large households and several married siblings continue to hold large areas jointly and also operate such land jointly, taking food from one single common kitchen. In the household of Lindok Rongpi of Rongkangthir village the position is as follows:

TABLE 5.4 : **Calendar of Agricultural Operations among the Karbi of Assam**

Month in English	Corresponding month in Karbi Language	Nature of Operation
January	Arkoy	Sokroi i.e. paddy brought home from field.
February	Thang thang	Ritlang (jhum fields selected).
March	Therepo	Mamte (forest areas burnt).
April	Jangami	Meri (weeding),
May	Aru	nong-chingdi (seeds sown).
June	Wosik	Hen-up-Kardik (bamboo shoots and wild tubers are searched in jungle).
July	Jakhang	Hen-up-Kerdong (bamboo shoots and tubers now grown and brought some for eating).
August	Pai Pai	Sok-mendu-lutai (jhum paddy cut and kept in jungle rest house).
September	Chiti	Bihen-up-ahi (bamboo shoots and wild tubers dried for eating in future).
October	Phre	Sokthe (paddy harvest time).
November	Phaikuni	Sok-bui-pengni, (paddy sorted).
December	Matijong	Sok-bui-cheyong (assessment of the quantity received).

Total Nos. of household members (including married daughters and their families).	15
Ownership of land	20 bigha
Actual owner	Father
Labour supplied by	married daughters
Land mortgaged	2 bigha
Dependence on produce of land	Less than 4 months
Dependence on other source (*i.e.* low paid service by 2 members)	2 months
Dependence chiefly on forest produce including bamboo-shoot & wild tuber	over six months

Similar pictures are drawn from the majority of the total of over 200 Karbi families, which have been intensively studied by author and P.B.S.V. Padmanabham (see for details Das *et al.*, 1983).

Also associated with these facts are old superstitions concerning investment on liquor for *pujas* which although causes much hardship but is the essential part of sociad life. This has close link with the extremely low productivity of land, dependence on wild tubers and bamboo-shoot and the general deficit family budget. Moreover, among the Karbis, the tendency to lease in their land for fixed produce is so great that most families, even though they are otherwise capable of doing good cultivation, resort to frequent and regular mortgaging (Das *et al.*, 1983), despite the abolition of the *paikas* system in the area.

Our study of over 200 families has revealed that 80 per cent of the Karbis are involved in *paikas* system of mortgaging and indebtedness. Under the pressure of these factors the character of the Karbi society that emerges could analytically be termed as 'marginal group'. In no way even

minimally the society is sustained by agrarian means. The values of nomadic social life dominate the economic sphere.

The *jhuming* is just not an economic pursuit of primitive type, it has strong social, religious and kinship base. Considering the *Jhum* societies' general social position they may analytically be treated as "marginal groups". But it could not be denied that these *jhum* societies share with the peasants some of the characteristics of the peasant life.

Case Study of a Segmentary Naga Tribe

Here we shall discuss yet another dimension of tribal economy with special reference to the issue of the dual inheritance system among the Southern Angami Nagas, who call themselves the Zounuo-Keyhonuo. In earlier two chapters we have described some aspects of social structure of these people. Here we shall try to reveal the economic features of their society. It is found that kinship and descent principles regulate and shape the economic activities of the villagers. Of particular significance is the segmentary social and territorial structure of these people which has direct relation with the issue of land management.

The Zounuo-Keyhonuo consider themselves as a giant patriclan descended from the 'Zounuo' and 'Keyhonuo', the twin ancestors of all the living. Each individual belongs to n inner ineage *(Punumi)*, which calculates descent two to three generations back to a known ancestor. This inner lineage in turn is linked with several more inclusive sub-lineages (known as *lokro* and *putsanu)*. The sub-lineages are linked with others in a lineage *(sarra)*. Several localized lineages are linked with a clan, *thenu*, whose members are descended from a distant ancestor. In the scheme of total tribal segmentary system the clans belong to ne of the moities, which are called as *Thevo* and *Tepa*.

The lineages are the basic units of social structure that emerge in corporate activities. A corporate estate known as Kayie is attached to the lineage, which is created through transmission of property in male line.

The village forms the largest residential territory. The village of Viswema has been broken down into four distinct, bounded and permanent territories which are occupied by the four clans (Pavoma, Kirazuma, Zerima and Rochuma) of the village. The single erm *thenu* is applied both to the land unit and social unit of clans. Within each clan territory all of its component lineages and sub-lineages are anchored to distinct segments of land. Smallest of such segments of land is called as *punumi-zhu* which is occupied by the smallest 'inner-lineage'. The concept of 'compound' which emerges in terms of residential areas has its economic significance because a compound is also used by its owner for producing some kinds of crop, such as potato.

The Jural Significance of the Land and the Forest

The village, as also the entire Zounuo-Keyhonuo territory, retains its traditional homogeneous ethnic composition and the politico-legal institutions intact on account of special provisions made in the Constitution of India. Most of Nagaland's area of 16,487 sq. km. consists of densely jungled hills; the population is sparse 7.73 lakhs according to 1981 Census. The Zounuo-Keyhonuo or the Southern Angami villages not only have a distinct agrarian structure, quite dissimilar from villages in Western Angami area (Das, 1982, 1982d), they are tied through a single genealogical structure which provides them their distinct tribal identity (Das, 1982, 1982a) and which also defines their actual territory in true political sense (Das, 1985a).

Here lies the significance of the social and territorial segmentary systems of the tribe. The

primary economic requirement for a villager is not that he should be the owner of land, but that he should be a member of the local groups in the village. Land (including terraced fields and *jhum* fields, used for slash-and-burn cultivation) and forest areas form the most important property in the village, whose ownership and rights to use could be enjoyed collectively as well as individually. Viswema villagers use long and comprehensive genealogies to specify their claims on such property items.

Significance of Lineage-level Corporate Estate of 'Kayie'

In Viswema a person must be a kinsman, *i.e.* a member of a descent group, which only provides him specific politico-jural status in order to be permitted to have access to economic resources, to exercise economic power, to make economic demands and have economic claims. The jural significance of the lineage-owned-estate of Kayie has to be understood first, before going into more details of individual ownership and married women's residual rights. 'Kayie' is the term used by the villagers to denote those terraced/jhum fields, forest areas and water channels which are created from the 'shares' received from the senior male agnates on their death. In order to have access to this lineage estate of land and other property items a person must at first be a member of the lineage. Outsiders can be granted land or any other item of Kayie for use only if they are assimilated into the lineage in some recognized status, either through adoption or assimilation in their capacity as 'cognates', such outsiders are jurally required to permanently settle in the adoptor's compound.

Individual's holdings are acquired by inheritance, by purchase and by gift. Division of private property is done amicably. During his life-time father

accomplishes the job of division. All sons generally receive equal shares of the father's own property, including land, irrigational channels and forest areas. If the mother is alive she retains a share too. Author shall discuss below the issue of inheritance by the daughters of their patrilineal (and matrilineal) property.

The Daughter's Jural Status

A woman's position in the total jural context of the society may be viewed by describing the pozuopu land which is transmitted only in the female line, *i.e.*, from mother to daughter and daughter to grand-daughter, on their marriages. The case of Kezevinu may be cited here. When Kezevinu left for Kohima she gave her *pozuopu* land (terraced fields) 'for use only' to Daniel (Elder brother son). Danil worked that land for sometime and then he gave it to Vizeho (Father brother son). Kezevinu could not sell her *pozuopu* land because that land is customarily to be given to Kezevinu's daughter at marriage.

At marriage a woman not only brings her *pozuopu* land but also a lot of other articles such as cattles (cow and pig), ornaments, clothes and several baskets of paddy. All these dowry articles are called as *tenumi-shiephro*. The *pozuopu* land are not evenly distributed among all the daughters; eldest daughter being entitled for a large share of such land. All the daughters are also given a part of father's own (agnatically) inherited land. Such land is called as *tenumi-kitsa*. If such a daughter dies without a child and no child is adopted then the land inherited from paternal (agnatic) line goes back to the corporate patrilineage *Kayie* estate, and the *pozuopu* land goes back to the affinal kins *'omuni)*.

It is clear from the above discussion that the Zounuo-Keyhonuo live at the point at which the patrilineal and matrilineal systems of inheriting

immovable and movable property meet. But author prefers to describe these people as a patrilineal society rather than as a dual descent system. This is mainly because there does not exist named groups based on both the alternative methods of reckoning unilineal descent. Goody (1967 : 77) has rightly maintained that the term "dual descent system", should be reserved for, "societies in which not only are there named groups based on both the alternative methods of reckoning unilineal descent, but in which both these groups are also corporate in the sense that property is vested in them and, therefore, transmitted between their members". The Zounuo-Keyhonuo example obviously does not show total similarity with Goody's statement. Until today the system of matrilineal inheritance, although operating in a limited range, has not been adversely affected on account of new social changes.

The basic fact remains that while in the past in-clan endogamy was the rule; today majority of marriages in this society are village endogamous. Thus marriages arranged within the village enable the female agnates to receive regular gifts and other help from their siblings throughout their life. The transfer of rights of a woman at her marriage is never absolute or permanent in true jural and economic sense. Her important economic and jural rights remain permanently vested in her patrilineage *(sarra)*. Agnatic jural status of a married woman has to be understood properly in a wider context since she as well as her offspring play important roles in the sphere of land management as outlined above. In several lineages of Viswema 'cognates' have been permanently assimilated into mother's lineages; such cognates enjoy total land rights in their adopted lineages.

Formation of Bilateral Kinship Groups

The Zounuo-Keyhonuo are strictly patriarchate.

The society is dominated by the father as head of the kinship group, characterized by patrilineal descent and virilocal residence. Illegitimate child-birth is not tolerated. Such actions are denounced and Zounuo-Keyhonuo customary laws require the legal father to marry the girl. The implication of such rules is that each individual must trace relation through both parents. The dominant type of family structure is that of conjugal-natal type but extended families are created by incorporation either of agnatic kinsmen and affinal kins or the cognates such as mother's brother and sister's son. Adoption of people even from outside the tribe has always been a remarkable feature of the society whereby the actors (insiders) become the jural parents of individuals (outsiders) who in the long run are totally assimilated into the adopted parents' lineage group *(sarra).* Since both in theory and practice the affinal kins (cognates) are easily incorporated into one's unilineal descent group, a sort of bilateral kinship groups are formed in which cognatic members receive their identity through the bond of descent reckoned through the mother.

The Land Management

In Viswema land is regarded as property in true jural sense. The Viswema people have pursued the practices of joint and individual ownership of their arable land, as also of their hunting areas. A person can, therefore, hunt only within the forest areas under his own possession or of his clan. It is in clan-land areas that most of the cultivable land of the members of a clan are found. The villagers make use of two sharply contrasting techniques, the *jhuming* and the terraced wet-rice agriculture, both are indigenously developed by the people (Das, 1980). Terraced fields are much valued when compared with the *jhum* fields, but much labour and organizational efforts need to

be directed towards proper maintenance of terrace fields.

The hill sides in the whole area are covered for miles with a succession of terraced fields. Greater reliance on these terraced fields, which are individually occupied, has made the notion of proprietary rights over land more pronounced. The private terraced fields are heritable as also transferrable. At this level thus the Zounuo-Keyho-nuo economy is a family economy. Similarly the jhum lands are also individually owned in Viswema, but in most cases large areas of *jhum* fields in the forests are generally owned jointly by a lineage *Kayie* in Viswema. A *Kayie* estate may as well include the terraced fields and irrigational water sources *(dzulyie)* in the specific clan territory. On account of this complex situation there always existed strong competition for having access to the productive resources, causing disputes of civil nature.

Rules and ideas concerning property varies in the village according to the nature of the pro-perty and the type of ownership right involved. The Zounuo-Keyhonuo term *puckinyi* denotes pro-perty of any type, movable or immovable. Besides this general term there are several specific terms denoting specific property objects. Thus the term *puoki-puol* is used to denote only the arable land and/or the house site. The forests are called as *ketsa-sokha.* The irrigational water channels, which are of great value for terraced fields, are called as *dzulyie.* The paddy and all other types of grains as well as domestic animals are called as *puotho-pusha.*

The land holding pattern have not been affected by any externally imposed political system, and even the recent limited population growth has not affected the same to any great extent. Each village has its own land and forest areas and they are clearly demarcated by natural streams, etc. Entire village area is further subdivided into clan

occupied areas of land and forest. The clan owned areas as well as lineage owned *Kayie* estates are formally controlled by the Elders. Within a clan territory there might be large areas of fallow land that has ceased to be cultivated only comparatively recently, a land covered with bush or forest. A question about the rights in each such particular stretch of forest will always produce a specific answer. Besides an individual and his family the wider social groups or descent groups that may have jural rights over the land, forest and irrigational water channels are the sub-lineages *(punumi, lokro,* putsanu), the lineage *(sarra)*, the clan *(thenu)* and the village *(razu)*. The basic fact remains that the ownership of any property item, particularly immovable one, is possible only through the kinship status and membership at each level of the wider social and territorial segmentary systems of the society.

In their rugged mountain country the Zounuo-Keyhonuo have practised wet-rice agriculture for centuries. Their villages are located in the summit of the hills and the entire hill sides around a village are covered for miles with succession of fine terraces of paddy. Closely resembling the *Ifugao* (Northern Philippine) terraced-land-scapes, the Viswema landscapes both baffle and delight the observer. In the flat land where water is plentiful and manageable to be led to and away from the fields without difficulty rice is grown under water. The fields are carefully prepared for the rice plants and the seedlings are transplanted from the seed beds to those regular fields. All care is taken at every stage to regulate the required flow of water into the fields. Before transplantation the fields are cleaned of weeds, and the soil is pulverized and soaked until it becomes mire of heavy mud. Transplantation is no easy job, it is also a dirtiest one, for each individual seedling must be planted in the thick mud. Men, women and children all turn out together so as to finish

the job in time. Now what remains is to keep the dikes in repair and to regulate the flow of water. It is necessary that during most of the growing season the terraced fields are covered by a few inches of water. Shortly before the rice ripens the water is drained from the fields and about a month later the rice is harvested. The Viswema villagers are expert in constructing terraced fields *(tekhoul)* and irrigation channels *(dzulyie)*. For thousands of feet the hill slopes are divided into terraces, many as wide as fifteen or twenty feet, others merely narrow strips. To make them stronger to withstand the heavy rains the terraces are further reinforced by walls of pebbles and plastered with mud.

There are three different types of *ekhoul* (terraced) fields in Viswema. These are as follows:

1. ***Dzutse :*** These fields are generally located near a natural stream and thus supply or flow of water to these fields does not depend on the rains. Maintenance of these terraces are also not very difficult.

2. ***Vekhra :*** These fields do not get the regular flow of water throughout the year. These fields depend on the water of rains for their functioning in proper manner. The maintenance of these fields is an endless work. To retain water in these fields at an uniform depth constant levelling has to be done with the greatest care.

3. ***Khuso :*** These fields also require relatively more labour. At every stage of the agricultural season the digging and levelling as well as supervision of proper flow of water is done with great care.

The agricultural decision-making in relation to terraced cultivation is carried out largely by individual farmers within traditionally autonomous local districts (the clan-territories). In those forest areas where the terrain makes it difficult to construct fields flat enough to be flooded, the Zounuo-Keyhonuo use a different technique for growing certain crops. This shifting or slash-and-burn agriculture depends solely on the water obtained from rainfall. The seeds are planted directly into the soil and the crop grows. The problem of keeping down the weeds is much more difficult in *Jhum* fields then in the wet fields. A year or two of dry cultivation deletes the fertility of land so that it is temporarily useless, and it must be abandoned for a few years, while the forest is allowed to grow up again. After the land has regained its fertility, the forest can be cleared once more. It must be burned, and the crops are usually planted in the ashes of the fire. The dependence of Zounuo-Keyhonuo people being more on the wet-rice cultivation the people have several times as much land available to them as they use in any single year, and the same is used in rotation.

The *jhuming* which is locally called as *melul* is thus not done in any large scale in Viswema. The Viswema people grow mostly potato and millet in the *jhum* fields. Such *jhum* fields are generally privately owned fields which are located in the forest areas close to the village. A particular forest area on which exclusive ownership right is acknowledged is called as *sokha*. Different *okha* forests are differently named and within ne *sokha* area several persons may hold ownership right. Besides *sokha* forest areas, there are clan-owned and village-owned forest areas. *huming* in these forests is done by acquiring necessary permission from the Elders. Grazing, hunting and forest produce collection could be done only within the

specified areas. As regards grazing the village is divided into two groups (consisting of two clans in each) to use two definite grazing areas, recognized though directional terms, such as "Eastward" and "Westward" grazing areas.

Indigenous Irrigation Methods (Dzulyie)

For the purpose of irrigation of the terraced fields called as *tekhoul* several types of irrigation channels called as *dzulyie* are constructed. Every stream and rivulet on the mountain side is captured, and the water led through long channels to flood the terraces. The water flows down from one terrace to the one below, and a complicated system of *water rights* governs the distribution of water. The share in a spring can be inherited as a gift or may be bought. uch transaction are supervised by the lineage Elders. Most *disputes* in Viswema are concerning the claims on water sources, and during his field-work in Viswema author discovered that half of the village population was involved in a dispute with the neighbouring village over tranditional jural claims on a rivulet flowing between these two villages. *Dzulyie* are those channels which are constructed by the people for the purpose of irrigation. While smaller *dzulyie* may be constructed and owned by a very small number of families, or by a single family; bigger channels called as *methu-dzulyie* are owned by larger group (lineage, clan or village). Thus depending on the type and nature of a *dzulyie* people having joint ownership of the same are entitled for only that quantity of water as decided by the Elders of the said group. It is necessary to repair the *dzulyie* every year and all those who have a joint ownership of a particular channel shall jointly do the necessary repairing of the same. The group of holders of joint right on a channel are called as *dzulyie-dzuvako*. Yet another kind of indigenous method of irrigation through aqueduct of bamboo, which

is known as dzuli in Viswema, is of great significance. Whenever the fields are isolated from a easily approachable ground or where ground is uneven the water is carried in such aqueducts of bamboo.

The Concept of Re-Distribution

The Zounuo-Keyhonuo have evolved a system of re-distribution of certain kinds of wealth. One of the highest statuses, that is of a sort of big-man in the society could be achieved by performing a series of rituals by erecting *zhotho* stones, combined with giving a corresponding series of communal feasts; and inviting, at several occasions, not only one's own agnatic and affinal kinsmen and village friends but also members of several friendly villages as we described in earlier chapter. Giving such feasts implies accumulation of wealth in the shape of rice, rice-beer and meat by individuals. The value which these people put upon their food does not consist simply in its capacity to satisfy hunger. This is apparent because only in a surplus economy that accumulation of perishable wealth in a large scale comes in for re-distribution. The elders who give such feasts are generally called by the prestigious title of *pithimi*. This status could be achieved only after having completed the whole series of feast-giving. Each occasion provides a particular status to a feast-giver. The use of surplus in this manner expresses the obligations of the host to fellow villagers. Many wants, upon which this type of tribal economy is based, are of an immaterial kind and the ambition to attain the status of a 'big-man' leads every man to accumulate more food and cattles . . . in order ultimately to give more than he receives in a exchange (of feast-transaction) to outface a rival in public esteem. This is not based on any idea that the maximization of material satisfaction is the economic goal.

Keeping in view these institutionalized gift-exchange, and highly sophisticated manner of feasting we may conclude that these tribal economies are just not based on the presumption of sheer survival. A peasant value system was already there even in the pre-colonial era. Acquisition of wealth and their distribution through prestige seeking feasts are transformed into possession of more durable symbolic prestige items such as spears, gongs, househorns, locally known as *kika*, of varied kind, and special weaving designs. These items remain hereditary property items of individual families and the prestige gained through permanent possession of these articles are utilized in several ways to manipulate even the kinship relations in favour of further maximization of such values, for example, in forming kin based labour pools in order to construct new terraced fields. One may compare here the material on the Swat described by F. Barth (1959, 1960).

In terms of political systems the Naga tribal societies could be placed between two polar types, Angami 'democracy' on the one hand, Konyak 'autocracy' on the other. However, if the basic social and economic institutions of these people are examined these institutions appear to be analogous in many respects. The question of stratification in the realm of descent system and kinship relations is thus easily operative as a result of exchange systems. There is evidence also to show that despite general appearance of social equality, aspects of inequality are revealed in unequal shares in exercise of power, wealth and prestige symbols, which were, in the pre-colonial period, more sharply represented in differences of free men and slaves -- two unequal groups (Das, 1982). While the British completely abolished the slavery an incipient social class structure could not be abolished.

An attempt has been made above to describe the salient features of the economy of the Zounuo-Keyhonuo Naga people. Since the emphasis is

chiefly laid on the issue of land management it became necessary to discuss the basic kinship and descent principles which regulate the economic activities of the people. Thus the social and territorial segmentary systems are described at first to understand the jural significance of management of *Kayie* category of land at the level of wider kinship groups, particularly the lineage. While describing individual holdings it became necessary to lay emphasis on the dual inheritance system (in patrilineal and matrilineal line), because there exists a particular category of land known as *pozuopu* which is matrilineally inherited, from mother to daughter. The real transaction of the *pozuopu* land takes place at the time of daughter's marriage.

The Zounuo-Keyhonuo are strictly patriarchate. The society is dominated by the father as head of the family, and by virtue of his belonging to the upper age-grade he may also be the representative of his wider kinship groups (the lineage or clan). Land (including terraced fields and *jhum* fields) and forest areas form the most important segment of property, whose ownership and rights to use could be enjoyed collectively as well as individually. The primary economic requirement for a villager is not that he should be the owner of land, but that he should be a member of the local groups, clans and lineages, which are organized through the segmentary principles. Since the land management is done at different levels, *i.e.*, the village level, the clan level, the lineage level and at individual household level; the use of detailed genealogies becomes the politico-jural necessity.

We observed that there exists in the society a well-developed system of gift-exchange which is combined with giving of prestige-seeking communal feasts to the villagers. Acquisition of perishable wealth such as rice, rice-bear and meat and their distribution through prestige-seeking feasts are transformed into possession of more durable symbolic prestige items, such as spears, gongs, househorns

(kika) and special weaving designs. The holders of these prestige items emerge as *big-men* who control the authority in politico-jural domain. Thus there is evidence to show that despite general appearance of social equality, aspects of inequality are revealed in unequal shares in exercise of power, wealth and prestige symbols. In the remote past the aspects of inequality were more sharply represented in differences of social categories of freemen and slaves. While the British had completely abolished the slavery, an incipient social class structure could never be abolished in tribal societies of North-East India.

SIX

ETHNIC IDENTITY AND CULTURAL REVIVALISM

THE imposition of an "inner-line" in 1873 over vast hilly tribal areas of the region had virtually put an end to the 'unauthorized' entry of non-local (non-tribal, in general) people into the hilly tribal areas. It cut off the chances of intense contact between the hillsmen and the plainsmen. The imposition of several other special administrative measures for tribal areas had further isolated the tribals from social and political developments taking place elsewhere in India. The difficult terrain, lack of proper communication and transport links with rest of India, distinctiveness of cultural systems as well as an alleged fear of loosing all their land and forest-areas on part of the highlanders had influenced the course of events in the sphere of identity consolidation among the tribesmen, particularly after the Idependence of India.

A review of the vast literature on the subject reveals several dimensions of cultural articulation, ethnic-identification and urge for cultural revivalism among the natives. The processes of fission and fusion have also been in operation in the area. Attempts by several groups of tribal people "at crystallization of ethnic identity on an expanded level cutting across the traditional boundaries" (Bhagabati, 1982) may be described as a part of the process of ethno-cultural fusion. We shall describe this process at work in several cases

such as the 'Naga' constellation of tribes, Mizo, Zeliangrong and Adi. The issue of "fission" is a subject of great theoretical interest. One important example of this is gradual separation of many 'clans' of general Kuki group of people, over decades, into distinct segments or 'tribes'

Yet another dimension of ethnicity is the rising phenomenon of reviving the elements of old culture and 'going-back' to enact the original religion among the ethnic groups of this region. In Manipur, sections of Meiteis have given up their Hindu faith and they now call themselves as followers of *Sanamahi* faith which "derives its inspirations from the traditional animistic tribal religion of the area". Several sections of the Assamese-Hindu people are similarly "trying to assert their original tribal way of life through revival and re-interpretation of tribal festivals and other aspects of culture, including language". This phenomenon is particularly observed among the Ahoms, Bodos and Karbis (Singh, 1982, Prabhakar, 1974; Das and Padmanabham, 1984).

Concept of "Man" and Articulation of Self-Identity

There are several examples whereby we find that the self-names of the tribal groups have been neglected and the names given by their neighbours have been imposed. The very word Naga and names of several Naga tribes such as Angami, Ao are the names given by the outsiders. The British were also not much sympathetic to the self-names and ethnic categories of the natives. The British not only neglected the self-name of *Tengima* for the Angamis, but they also capriciously included within Angami category several non-Tengima groups such as *Chakhri* and *Kheza*, which are now recognized segments of a distinct tribe in Nagaland. Even the present-day group of Angami includes within it several non-Tengima groups such as Zounuo-Keyhonuo (or Dzunokehena). Elsewhere

in this book we have critically examined the ethnic position of Zounuo-Keyhonuo *vis-a-vis* other Angami groups. We observe that the segment of Zounuo-Keyhonuo emerges as a 'tribe' with all its structural and functional characteristics (also see Das, 1982). This example also exhibits the fission process at work.

The question of ethnic identity in North-East India remains a complex subject on account of several sociological and historical reasons. In several cases the identity question is intimately tied with the wider political aspiration of the people concerned (Singh, 1982). Let us examine the Zeliangrong case. The Zemeis, the Liangmeis and the Rongmeis always had the myth of their common ancestry and this provided the opportunity for leaders of these tribes to combine themselves into a single 'group' and thus the prefixes of each of these three group-names were combined into one name 'Zeliangrong' (Kabui, 1982). It was in a large meeting held in Manipur on 15th February, 1947, at Keishamthong, that the word "Zeliangrong" was coined and adopted (Kabui, 1982; also see Mukherjee *et al.*, 1982). In most cases the tribal names are flexible through space and time and they have always varied situationally. In case of Adi tribe of Arunachal Pradesh we find the process of fusion in operation. The Adi tribe today consists of Padams, Miniyongs, Gallongs, Pasi and other groups who have similarities in their dress, hair-style, material culture, and a language intelligible to each other, with little dialectical variation. Earlier these groups of people were called as 'Abor' which to them has been a derogatory term used by plainsmen. The word 'Abor' means 'barbarous'. The term Adi is found appropriate and accepted to all concerned because of its value-free character. Term Adi means 'hill people'. The Nishings of Kamla valley have similarly rejected their earlier name 'Dafla' and they now identify themselves as 'Nishings', which also means

'hill people'.

Identifying and re-identifying one's own group as man or 'people" or 'hill-people' is common in many parts of the North-east region. The earst-while Mikirs of Assam have always called themselves as *Arleng*, which means 'man'. The term *Singhpho* also means 'man'. The meaning of Bodo is man. The Garos being highlanders have rightly called themselves as *Achik-mande* which means 'hill-man'. The Lushai and other allied tribes of the Mizo hills areas generally call themselves by a single word 'Mizo', which means hill-man. The concept of "man" thus remains supereminent in tribal mind. More examples on this subject shall be described in following pages.

The Bodo Identity

The Bodo constitue the largest ethnic group among the tribal populations of Assam. Tribal communities of Bodo origin are also found in other states of North-east. Apart from Bodo-Kachari, the Bodo tribes found in Assam are Rabha, Hojai, Hajong, Deori, Sonwal, Mech, Dimasa, Lalung, Barman and plains Miris. Inspired by their glorious past the Bodo people retain their cultural traditions almost intact and "they have contributed to a great extent in the cultural and ethnic configuration of the Assam valley" (Chatterji, 1951).

Development of ethnicity among the Bodos may be traced first in the formation of Bodo Sahitya Sabha which was aimed at uniting all Bodo people on the issue of language. The elite among the Bodos are mostly *Brahmas* who are better off than the rural non-*Brahma* Bodos.

Among other Bodo tribes are Rabha, Sonwal and Koch. The Rabhas constitute one of the important plains tribes of Assam. They belong to the Bodo group. Their language belongs to Tibeto-Burman linguistic group. The Rabha are found in the districts of Kamrup, Goalpara, Darrang

and Garo Hills of Meghalaya, but they have their main concentration in the district of Goalpara. The Rabha tribe is divided into several groups, namely, Pati, Rangdani, Maitori, Totla, Bitlia, Dahuri, Shenga, etc. The first three groups generally enjoy a superior status. The Sonowal Kachari are mostly found in the Brahmaputra valley and they also belong to the Bodo group. It is believed that the prefix Sonowal came to be used during the period of the Ahom Kings when the Kacharis in the Brahmaputra valley took to the trade of gold washers. The Sonowal Kacharis are mainly concentrated in Dibrugarh district. Originally they had their own dialect, but at present most of them speak Assamese language.

The Koch ethnic group is said to be formed by the descendents of tribes like Kachari, Lalung, Mikir and Rabha. Their present territory is spread in whole of Brahmaputra valley, with main concentration in Goalpara and Kamrup districts of Assam. Originally they had their own Bodo language, but at present all of them speak Assamese language.

Mishing Self-Identity

The Mishing constitute one of the major tribal groups of upper Assam. Among several tribal groups of North-east, the Mishing have an unique historical background. According to Bhandari (1984) "the Mishings originally inhabited the hill lying north of the Upper Brahmaputra Valley in Siang and Lohit districts of Arunachal Pradesh. Although Mishing identify themselves as Mishing, they are called by the plains-Assamese by the term Miri and thus the widespread use of the term Miri has come to stay. They are officially listed as Miri in the list of the Scheduled Tribes".

The term 'Miri' has, however, caused some confusion in the proper identification of the Mishing who regard it 'to be a misnomer' (Bhandari, 1984). It is interesting to note that the term Miri is

also used to designate other tribal communities inhabiting the hills of the North-east frontier regions between the gorge of the Subansiri river and the Siyang river in Arunachal Pradesh. The British also accepted the terms like Miri without distinguishing between different hill tribes. For example, Dalton (1949 : 423) did not make any distinction between various ethnic groups like the "Sarak, Panibotia, Tarbotia, Ghasi, and Ghaghasis" and designated all of them as "hill Miris" although these ethnic groups "are closely related to the Daflas" rather than to the Mishing who, according to their traditions, are closer to the Adi group of tribes.

Some scholars believe that the term 'Miri' means 'go-between'. It is because of the fact that the Mishing 'became the medium of communication between the Abor and the Assamese' (Bhandari, 1984), and also because they acted as 'middlemen (Gait, 1905 : 317) that they were named as 'Miri'. Another strong interpretation is provided by Grierson (1909 : 586). He is of the opinion that the word is Mi-ri, (of which the first syllable is of Tibetan group, which means 'man'). Crooks (1908 : 33) does not agree with this interpretation. He thinks that the syllable 'Mi' does not mean 'man' in the Abor-Miri languages, and the latter syllable 'ri' does not quite clearly show how the whole compound would mean 'man' or 'gentleman'.

Buddhist Ethnic Identity

An anthropo-sociological report produced by Census of India (1961) provides some material whereby history, mythology and aspects of culture among a large number of tribes are described (Roy Burman and Thukral, 1961). A few examples from this source shall be used and examined in the light of material available on the same subject elsewhere.

As noted by Elwin, Arunachal Pradesh may

conveniently be divided into three main artistic and cultural provinces. The people of the first are Buddhists by religion and include Sherdukpens, Monpas and Bugun. Hursso or Aka and Dhammai groups are close to them and have come under their influence. Though the artistic tradition of the Khamptis and Singphos has taken a different course, and they are geographically isolated from the border groups, it will be convenient to include them here, for they are Buddhists and have common cultural elements.

The second culture area stretches from West to East, through parts of Subansiri, Siang and Lohit. This area consists of tribes with varying traditions, yet united culturally in their attachment to weaving, absence of wood carving and a stress on fine work in cane and bamboo.

The third culture area falls in South-east. Here we have Noktes, Wanchos, and Tangsas. (The Nokte and Wancho belong to Naga cultural traditions). The Nokte and Wancho were formerly head-hunters, they built *Morung* houses for their youngmen and big houses for their chiefs. Their art expresses itself in wood carving and personal decoration (quoted in Roy Burman and Thukral, 1961).

Although a good many tribes are Buddhists by religion but within them diversification is observed. The tribes of Kameng, for example, are influenced by the *Mahayan* school of Buddhism, on the one hand, and by local tribal faith, on the other. The Singphos and Khamptis practise *Hinayan* school of Buddhism (quoted in Roy Burman and Thukral, 1961).

The Buddhist Monpas are divided into three units: in the Tawang are North Monpas, in Daling are Central Monpas and in Kolan are the Southern Monpas.

The Sherdukpen also belong to the first cultural region under Buddhist influence. They form a small tribal group living in the villages of Rupa,

Jigaon and Shergaon in the south western part of Kameng division. The native name of Rupa is Thongthui and Shergaon is called by the term Senthu. The people of these villages are, therefore, traditionally known by each other as *Thongjis* and *Senjis* respectively. The Akas are also a Buddhist tribe of Arunachal Pradesh. They have always maintained their distinctive characteristics although they have been surrounded in all directions by other tribal groups such as by the Miji in north, by Sherdukpens in west, and by Bangni in the east. Almost all of the twenty-one Aka villages are ethnically homogeneous in character but Dinjungania village consists of mixed population representing Aka, Miji, Bangnis and Nishings. The Akas call themselves as Hursso or Hrusso. The word 'Aka' in plains areas means 'painted'. The Akas are divided into two main sections,–Kutsun and Kovatsun – which were traditionally ruled by their respective chiefs. Besides these two main divisions there is yet another group which is called as "Miri-Akas" who occupy the other side of Kaya river and nearer to the Bangni territory. The Miri-Akas are known as "Khrome". They are also mentioned as Angka-Miris. In 1835 the Kapaschor Akas arranged a raid under the leadership of their chief, Tagi Raja, and wiped out a British outpost at Balipara.

Other Ethnic Identities

The Bangni were earlier known as Dafla. According to Furer-Haimendorf the Daflas refer to themselves in their own language as *Nisu* or *Ni*, the latter word meaning simply 'human being'. All Bangnis trace their descent from one legendary ancestor, whose three sons are believed to have been the forefathers of three groups of clans known as Dapum, Dodum and Dol. In some villages on the Bangni side the Miji and the Bangni live side by side in the same settlement. In Bameng area of

North-east Kameng division the Bangni refer to themselves as 'Nashang' or 'Mlaseng Bangni', while the southern Bangni in Sepla area called themselves as *Yano*. The Bangnis of the foothills areas are again *Mloke* or *Mlote* Bangni by their own designation. The Kameng Bangni refer to the eastern Bangni as *Tagin* or *Talgin* Bangni.

The Bangnis call the *Mijis* as *Miji Bangro* and the Akas as *Manga* or *Laling Bangro*. Though the Akas and Mijis inter-marry, they call themselves differently. The Mijis give themsevles the name of Nommai in eastern areas and Dommai in western areas. All these terms mean 'man'. The Mijis name the Akas as *Gannu* and the Bangni as *Gazi*. Elwin (1960) reported that the Tagins "Sometimes affiliate themselves with the Daflas (Bangnis) and sometimes with the Adis".

In Siang area the main tribal community is the Adi with a number of distinct sub-tribes. The Pailibo, Milan and Tagin live in north-west, Gallong in the west and south-west, the Ashing, Minyong and Shimong live in the central region, and Karke and Bori live inbetween the Gallong and Minyong area. The Adi Bori live inbetween the Bokar and Shimong area. Minyong, Pasi and Pangis live in the eastern region of the district. There is a split overall the Padam groups of the Adis in south-west region of Lohit district also. Previously these groups of people were known as Abor. It is only recently that they have started calling themselves Adi. From their myths it appears "that the Ramos and Bokars are brothers. The Ramos descended in direct line from Dungram, the elder brother of Dumgumi, the ancestor of the Bokars. The Ramos appear to have originally settled in the valley of Tang San Po. Their ancestors left their original settlement, and for a long time they moved from place to place. The ancestors of the Bokars used to live in a place known as Mate. They are very much like the Ramos and Pailibes. There are altogether twenty-two small

villages in the Bokar area. The biggest is Gesing. The less important villages are Pangri, Yangrang, Taihiyong, Rote, Pidi, Ruying, Kate, Luto, Ramni, Hemi or Mte, Pote, Karle, Manigong, Ingo, Pulom, Simegong, Papigro, Tadadege, Lapugora, Yorkongdo and Nama-siba. The Bori villages are situated on the top of the hills on both the banks of the Siyom or Yomgong and the Sike. The Pailibos are descendants of Bomong. They used to inhabit an area originally nearabout Dosing. They started migrating southwards, but due to natural calamities they had to turn back by the right bank of the Siyom and finally settled in the area nearabout Yapuik. Their neighbours on the south-east are the Gallongs from whom they are separated by the Bayor hills.

The Noctes are a tribe in Tirap district of Arunachal Pradesh, having a very close contact with the plains of Assam. There is some influence of Vaishnavism among sections of them. Once these people were very skilful head-hunters. When Elwin visited some of the Nocte villages in 1951, he saw some hundred skulls preserved in the *morung* house (Elwin, 1951).

In Lohit Frontier Division the Mishmis constitute the main tribe, however there are also small number of other tribes in this area. As noted by Miils, "all Mishmis of the Lohit valley are divided into two groups differing in language but not at all in custom. These are the Miju of the upper Lohit and the Digaru to the west of them on the lower reaches (these two groups call themselves Kaman and Tara respectively, but 'Miju' and 'Diga-ru' are commonly used in the literature). The aboriginal clans do not form a separate group, but form part of one or other of the linguistic groups according to their location. Most, but by no means all, of the Miju clans claim to have come from the Kachin country, while most of the Digaru clans seem to have come from the Chuli-Katta Mishmi country, where they must have been established

for a long time after their entry into Assam"(Mills, J.P., 1952).

As noted by T.K. Baruah the Idus are distinguished from their neighbours, the Adis and the Taraon Mishmis, by a peculiar way of dressing the hair. Both men and women shave the hair at the sides of the head, and wear it long at the back, tying it up in a knot at the back. The hair in the front is cut short and hangs over the forehead.

The Taraon Pulo and the Idu Pulu clans originally had a common ancestor. Some of the Taraon clans such as the Buili, Momba, Catam and others were originally Idus, who by their long association with the Tarons, have been assimilated by them. According to Gait *(History of Assam)* the Mishmis inhabited the area between Dibong and Brahmakund and have four Divisions namely, Chulikatta, Digaru, Miju and Bebejia. According to J.P. Mills (1952), the Chulikatta Mishmis lying to the north and west of the Lohit valley represent an early wave of immigrants, it was from them that the first Mishmi migrants represented now by Digaru entered the Lohit valley about 500 years ago. They were followed by the ancestors of the Miju coming from Khamptilong and entering the hills through the present Singpho (or Assam Kachin) country. The Miju and Digaru have retained their languages but have common uniform culture which differs considerably from the Chulikattas, on the one hand, and the Kachins, on the other. They are divided into two groups, Miju of upper Lohit and Digaru of the west. On the lower reaches they call themselves Kaman and Tara respectively.

Before the British took possession of the province of Assam, all the Mishmi groups were obedient to the orders of the then Assam Government, and paid tribute to its representatives at Sadiya. They also gave allegiance to the Khamptis and Singphos even as late as 1835.

The Khasi and Jaintia Identity

Kynpham Singh, a Khasi scholar, observed that "the Khasis are descendants of the sixteen tribes, nine tribes in their heavenly abode and seven tribes who made their earthly abode in these hills; and that once upon a time there was direct communication and inter-course between the 'Nine' above and 'Seven' below *via* the Diengiei Tree which grew on Diengiei Peak, west of Shillong" (also see Mackenzie, 1884 : 220). It is also believed that the original self-name of the Khasi is *Kahii* or *Khahi* (Mackenzie, 1884 : 220). Despite their distinct self-names the Khasis and the Jaintias consider themselves as one and the same people. "The word 'Khasi', therefore, always includes the Pnars, who generally call the Khasis as Khynriams or Khasis to distinguish themselves as a distinct entity. The Khynriams, on the other hand, call the Pnars as Syntengs, Jaintias or Pnars, and refer to themselves as Khasis" (Rymbai, 19). Within the Khynriam group are "the Bhois, the Wars, and the Lyngams. Within the Pnar group are the Wars, the Labangs, the Nangtungs, the Khyrwangs, Nangphylluts. The Wars are thus found in both the groups and are known as War Jaintias or War Pnars. This sort of a differentiation between the Pnars and the Khynriams is the outcome of a political division between them over the centuries" (Rymbai, 19).

Despite their mythological basis for "ethnic unity" of Khasi-Pnars or Khasi-Jaintias, enough historical evidence could be cited to show the varying patterns of structural developments among these two groups of people. Of several examples we emphasize one aspect. This is concerning Hinduism. The reigning King was, however, succeeded by the son of his sister from a Pnar father following the matrilineal system. Later, to facilitate control of the territories in the plains in the North, the *Dalois*, with the consent of the *Daloi* of Nyrti-

ang, agreed that the Jaintia Kings should have their summer residence of Nyrtiang. The Kings brought a Brahmin with them to Nyrtiang which resulted in "a remarkable influence of Hinduism among the people of Nyrtiang, and, quite visibly amongst rest of the Pnars as well" (Rymbai, 1979). Comparatively the Khasis had little chance to come in close contact with plainsmen in such institutional manner as we found among the Pnars and, therefore, they (Khasi) could retain most of their traditions and religion rather intact till they came under the influence of the Christianity.

Identity Articulation in Naga Hills Areas

As early as in 1942 Reid wrote that "(In Naga Hills) both place-names and names of tribes are exceedingly confusing throughout the older writings". Lt. Vincent stated that "the people called by us 'Angamee Nagas' were totally ignorant of the signification of the term and he learnt that this was a term given by the Cacharees to all independent Nagas signifying in their language, 'unconquered'". This is repeated in 1873 by Captain Butler, in the long extract regarding the Naga tribes, which is quoted in Mackenzie's book. Similarly the phrase 'Hatiguria' was for long used as a synonym for "Ao" though it was certainly known as early as 1886 that the latter was more correct. Very frequently a tribe applies to itself merely the word meaning "man" in its own language --with the implication that members of that tribe are the only real men in the world. Thus the Lhota call themselves "Kyon", the name "Lhota" being apparently that applied to them by the Assamese" (Reid, 1942 : 99-100).

The same process went on at the southern-end of the Naga Hills areas. Reid (1942 : 100) mentions "Western Angami names were soon brought into use, though often misspelt, and for long Western Angami names were used for Eastern Angami

and Kacha Naga villages. For example, the Eastern Angmi village of Chizami was wrongly called Khezabama, and even now Henima would hardly be recognized by its correct name of *Tenning*. When we began to acquire more detailed knowledge of the Eastern Angami country we began to learn their own names for their own villages. But here again the same muddle was repeated and Eastern Angami names were used for the less known Sangtam and Rengma villages beyond them. Even today 'Meliomi' and 'Primi' are probably in more general use than the correct names of 'Meluri' and 'Akhegwo'. In fact in the whole belt of western and southern Nagaland the identity question has been exceedingly problematic. Inclusion of small Naga tribes like Pochury, Chakhri and Khezha into wider tribal constellations is a case in point. The Pochurys were, interestingly, called interchangeably as 'Eastern Rengmas' or 'Sangtams'. The Chakhri and Khezha were called by the British as Eastern Angamis (see Hutton, 1921, Chapter on Introduction), while today they have become Chakhesang. Chakhesang in fact is an acronym formed by letters derived from the tribal names of Chakhri, Khezha and Sangtam and, therefore, Chakhesang acquires a territorial framework rather than an ethnic framework. Phek district of Nagaland is home of Chakhesang tribe. Author has described the question of 'tribeship' in southern Nagaland in the chapter on Political Systems.

Emergent Naga Identity in Manipur

As mentioned by Kabui (1985) "the Anal is originally an old Kuki tribe, but during past two decades the Anals have started to align themselves with the Nagas". The Naga and Kuki systems have been oscillating from one end to another for quite some time, but ultimately the Kuki identity is being submerged into Naga constellation of tribes, as author has tried to show earlier also. But one

must agree that at certain institutional and structural levels the Kuki and Naga societies differ from each other. Generally most of the Naga groups do not have hereditary chiefs, while the Kukis have; the Nagas, in most cases, have the communal pattern of land ownership, while the Kukis, in most cases, have the individualistic pattern of land ownership. Attempts have been made in recent years by scholars to describe aspects of this tribal dynamism. A brief survey of the same follows.

The Kuki Identity *vis-a-vis* Naga Identity

A local scholar (Gangte, 1984) has tried to make a proper classification of the Naga and Kuki groups of tribes. It is a well-known fact that the proper categorization of all small Kuki clans (and groups) had created problem because of their migratory habits. Emergence of the Lushais as a distinct group of tribe had further created problem in the context of formation of *Kuki* identity. This is more particularly so because of the historical ethnic combination of the Lushai Kuki Clans. Shakespear in his famous book The *Lushai Kuki Clans* (1912), divided the people in five categories:

(1) Clans included in the term Lushai (1912 : 127-132),
(2) Clans which are influenced by the Lushais (1912 : 133-145),
(3) The old Kuki clans (1912 : 146-186), such as Aimol, Anal, Chawte, Chiru, Kolhen, Kom, Lamgang, Purum, Tikhup, Vaiphei, Khawthlang and Khawchhak,
(4) The Thado (Thadou clan) (1912 : 187-210),
(5) The Lakher or Mara clan (1912 : 211-223).

Besides the above Kuki-Lushai-Lakher constellation the Naga ethnic element has also always been very significant. Thus, Brown (1874 : 53) opined that since the Chirus were similar to the Kabui Naga in manner and dress, they, ". . . form a

connecting link between the southern tribes (Kukis) and the Kowpuis (Kabuis)". McCullock and Hodson also treated the Chirus "as a link between the Kukis and Nagas, while at the same time categorized them as one of the Kuki tribes (McCullock, 1859 : 65; Hudson, 1911 : 21).

Thus we find that there has always been a problem of proper recognition of native ethnic categories, particularly in case of Kuki groups of people.

The Nagas with bigger and more clear-cut corporate social groups than the Kukis have always occupied well-defined areas and are not scattered like the Kukis. The Kukis had been historically moving from one place to another all over hill areas, "mingling with the Nagas in the Naga preponderant areas" (Gangte, 1984). In further development, "while a group of Kuki tribes staunchly pleaded for adherance to the conventional nomenclature 'Kuki', despite its complete deletion from the list of recognized tribes in Manipur, for a common identity of all the Kuki tribes; another group propounded the 'Chin' theory with a policy to create a 'Chin-land' for all the ethnic groups of the Kuki tribes on the plea that the term was being used in Burma for the same groups of people who were known as 'Kuki' in India. A third group advocated 'Mizo' as the most acceptable appellation with an argument that the nomenclature Kuki was absolete" (see Gangte, 1984). Several common terms have since been coined to bring all "Kuki and allied tribes" together under single frameworks, such as *Zomi*, *Chin-Kuki-Mizo*, and *Chikim*.

One scholar feels that the great awakening among the Tangkhuls for a Naga identity aroused the spontaneous response from other tribes to accept the term 'Naga' as their common identity (see Gangte, 1984). Among all the Kuki clans, the Thadou (living in the North, East and West in Manipur) have been greatly influenced by the Nagas. In view of Gangte (1984) the Thadou are

"the exponents for continuance of the term 'Kuki' as a common identity". The Hmars and Paites are found in South. According to Gangte (1984) "the smaller tribal groups like the Gangte, the Simte, the Vaiphei, the Zou, etc. are being sandwiched inbetween the Thadous and their cognates, on the one hand, and the Hmars and the Paites, on the other". Thus we see that these groups are often influenced by the bigger groups on either side of them, and are, therefore, non-aversed to adopting any of the nomenclatures for a common identity, provided such adoption gives all the groups a sense of solidarity and unity.

Emerging Trends

We have examined above several examples of ethnic-boundary/ethnic-identity articulation and consolidation. (In other chapters also we have touched upon the subject of articulation of ethnic identity in North-east.) As a matter of fact, as Bhagabati suggests, "it is necessary to view the increasing assertion of tribal identity as part of the overall process of the social change" (1982). It is argued by some scholars, says Bhagabati (1982), that special provisions to tribals have inordinately accentuated the growth of a sort of "communal consciousness" and ethnic politics based on this consciousness. Thus, to quote N.K. Bose: "Tribal communities formerly tried to better identification with the Hindus or with the ruling class through Westernization and Christianity. Now power can be derived by political organization into parties" (1964 : 5, quoted by Bhagabati, 1982). There is truth in Bose's observations, particularly in the specific context of North-east. We shall try to discover part of this truth in the following pages. Electoral politics has significantly given rise to inter-group conflicts in North-east and this is also affecting the democratic values and traditions of the tribals. In the formation of the

Kuki Nationalist Assembly, a political party representing the Kuki tribes, "the Thadous have a greater control and a greater number of volunteers and the sitting K.N.A. Member in the Assembly is a Thadou. The growing conflict between the Thadou and other smaller Kuki tribes like Kom and Koireng is more than apparent" (R.K. Das, 1982). If we see the local history of other tribes similar situations could be discovered. The tribalism and ethnicity have become more intense as a result of the adult franchise in most tribal areas. A Naga scholar, Shri L.L. Yaden, writes ". . . the adult franchise has penetrated deep into the Naga social and political strata and it has shattered the very foundation of the Naga social custom, caused economic disparity between the haves and have-nots, caused division in the Churches, created a class of parasites in the society and opened the way wide for the millionaires to fight election into the Assembly and to capture power and the monopoly of the State resources for their vested interest". Yaden also states that "(1) system of Assembly Election on adult franchise is quite contrary to the traditional democratic system of election of representatives on the basis of consensus and this system of direct election has directly infringed on the system of election of representatives on the basis of consensus; (2) Elections in Nagaland has widened the division between the tribes, ranges, villages, clans, etc. . . . election have sowed the seeds of disunity; (3) Elections in Nagaland have caused division in the village church and in the tribal church association. Many church leaders have supported candidates of choice causing disharmony in the church. Many Missionaries have joined election campaign; (4) Elections in Nagaland have encouraged sexual immorality among the youth by working together on election duties. There is thus a spread of venereal disease among the youth; (5) Party politics has also affected the village administration,

thus one group plays against the other group and ultimately the people suffer" (Yaden 1984).

Patterns of Cultural-Revivalism

Socio-cultural developments in North-East India followed a path which was entirely different from that elsewhere in India. Singh has observed in his 'Introduction' to *Tribal Movements in India* (Vol. 1) that "this region (North-east) . . . was not completely integrated within the politico-economic system of colonialism: it remained relatively isolated from the cultural systems of the mainland and the political upheavals of the freedom struggle" (1982 : XI). Further in the same Introduction it is observed that "Cultural dimension of the political processes has been the phenomenal rise of Christianity in all North-eastern states during the 1961-71 decade, as a symbol of tribal identity, as a marker of status in all states, except Arunachal. Sanskritisation has not been at work in the North-eastern Hills. The Brahma movement among the Bodo-Kacharis stopped short of the hills. The Sanskritisation process in the Manipur valley has not only come to a stop, there is even an attempt at de-Sanskritisation, an impulse to go back to the pre-Vaishnava pristine forms of Meitei culture. The nativistic *Sanamahi* cult has gained ground. Two other nativistic movements seek to revive the pure and pristine elements of tribal culture. The *Seng Khasi*, a Socio-cultural organisation of the Khasi was established as early as in 1889 to preserve the Khasi way of life, with its ancient system of clan relationship, which was disturbed by the large-scale conversion of the Khasis to Christianity. The second, the *Zeliangrong* movement, started as a religio-cultural movement under Jadonang, assumed a political overtone and became the only movement with the link with national freedom struggle. Under Rani Gaidinliu it has remained strongly nationalistic, has prompted tribal solidarity

. . ." (Singh, 1982 : XII-XIII).

Cultural Consciousness among the Karbis

Around the middle of 1947, when the North-east Frontier (Assam) Tribal and Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas Sub-committee of the Advisory Committee of the Constituent Assembly toured the hills, it noted that "the Hill people (including the Mikirs-Karbis) . . . were not found lacking in political conciousness" (Chaube, 1973 : 67). Areas of the Garo Hills and the Mikir Hills tracts of Nowgong and Sibsager districts had some common political experience, atleast since 1937, and considerable connection with the plains (Chaube, 1973 : 71). The Mikir (Karbi) MLA, Khorsing Terang, and S.S. Engti had set up a *Karbia Durbar* (Karbi Assembly) as early as in 1947 and desired consolidation of the Mikir (Karbi) areas, protection of customs and extension of franchise (Chaube, 1973 : 72).

The most remarkable thing about the Bardoloi Report was the skill in proposing the formation of the 'Autonomous District Councils' which would protect the hillmen from unscrupulous plainsmen (Chaube, 1973 : 92). Under the provisions of the Sixth Schedule, the Rules for Administration of Justice of 1937 continued to operate and which provided that the administration of district was vested in Governor of Assam, Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner, and his assistants and the traditional village authorities (such as *gaon bura)* recognized by the Government (Chaube, 1973 : 97).

In the background of these developments as also in the context of the modern history of Assam, the social cultural aspiration of the Karbi people may be understood. It is with the help of the detailed discussions held by author with several Karbi leaders including Shri Roy Enghee, and by reviewing several memoranda which the Karbi people have been submitting to the authorities

that the following observations are made:

> "At the time of creation of Meghalaya the Mikir Hills and the North Cachar Hills District Councils were alleged to have been given a right of option to join the Meghalaya State. The people of these two districts since that period have stood unitedly in launching their common programmes. The people of these two districts could see that the Khasis, Garos, Mizos and Nagas are all getting their separate States or Union Territory within the Indian Union. So when the option was given to the people of the Mikir Hills and the North Cachar Hills districts to join hill tribal state, they opted to remain in Assam. According to their Memorandum, approved on 1-6-1973 by the Mikir Hills and North Cachr Hills Leaders Conference, the following facts were stated to be most crucial:
>
> 1. "Only when strongly persuaded by the Assamese leaders that these people opted to remain in Assam".
> 2. "Then came the 'medium of instruction' issue, imposing *Assamese* in all levels of education throughout the State"
> 3. "The Assamese people made no secret of their determination to *Assamise* the linguistic minorities by wiping out their distinct language, culture, traditions and ways of life".
> 4. "Thus these people saw the solution only in their going out of Assam".
> 5. "And thus 'the leaders of the two hill districts formally organized themselves into the 'Mikir and North Cachar Hills Leaders Conference', and decided to demand creation of a 'separate state' with the two hill districts and the contiguous tribal areas of Assam".
> 6. "Another contributing point was that the

central grants under Art. 275 have always been misused apart from uniform mismanagement and negligence in all the levels of administration. The per capita expenditure of these two hill districts is much less than other hill areas of the region".

7. "The Tribal people of the hill districts along with other sections of linguistic minorities are left with no doubt that the Assamese junta are determined to *'Assamise'* them by forcing Assamese language and culture upon them and wiping out their own language and culture which they too cherish to develop. Such naked imposition the hill people are not going to tolerate. Nor are they prepared to loose their distinct identity as a tribe. The only solution for the hill people is separation from Assam and to have their own state. This feeling is enhanced by the fact that all the earstwhile sister districts have, after going out of Assam, not only had their political aspirations fulfilled but also are enjoying much larger shares of national resources".
8. "Outside these two districts there are people of the same tribes spread in contiguous rural areas, but they are not regarded as members of the Scheduled Tribes to which they ethnically and linguistically belong, and thus this situation deprives them of the safeguards and advantages which are extended to the Scheduled Tribes of the autonomous districts. It will be to the advantage of all concerned to include the contiguous tribal areas in the proposed new State" (see Das *et al.*, 1984).

The leaders of the two districts presented one memorandum to the Prime Minister on the 9th June, 1973. Above points are taken from the more detailed, original memorandum which was signed

by Shri P.K. Gorlosa and Shri S.R. Thaosen, on behalf of the Mikir and North Cachar Hills Leaders Conference, Haflong.

During the course of the fieldwork in the Karbi area several leaders belonging to different associations and organisations were contacted and from them large number of memorandum and minutes of the meeting were collected. The whole literature is too exhaustive to be incorporated here hence only a few points which are relevant shall be re-produced below:

> The Chief Executive Member of the Karbi Anglong district, Shri K.S. Bey, in his memorandum submitted to the Chief Minister of Assam in the year 1979 observed that "regional imbalance is found within the Karbi Anglong district on account of absence of any special development programme. Though the government transferred to the District Council certain development powers since 1970, but this really did not get executed properly. It is felt that every year large amounts of plan funds amounting to several lakhs of rupees are surrendered by different departments. Under the circumstances it is felt that the government of Assam should agree to the formation and delegation of full powers to the Hill Areas Development, so that the aspirations of the hills people could be fully met".

In one memorandum submitted to the Prime Minister on 9th June 1980, Shri Roy Enghee (leader of the delegation) expressed the following views:

1. Tribal rights in land and forest should be respected. More power in the form of Judicial power, etc., should be given to the District Council Authority so that illegal encroacher may be evicted.
2. Indigenous tribal people of Karbi Anglong

Autonomous hill district of Assam should be properly trained and a team of our own should be build up to do work of administration and development. This is keenly felt in recent years because of the lack of sufficient zeal and enthusiasm of officials coming from the plains of Assam.

3. The District Council Authority should be empowered to constitute a Recruitment Board. The Recruitment Board if constituted will be able to safeguard the interest of local Youths.
4. We feel an ALL INDIA RADIO Centre is established at Diphu, the Headquarters of Karbi Anglong, then we can revive our tradition and culture through suitable programmes. Moreover, it will be of much help for adult education and removing age-old prejudices and superstitions. A Centre of All India Radio has been established.
5. We feel that the boundary of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Hills District should be clearly marked so that our innocent tribal people may not have to face harassment from people of neighbouring areas.
6. We feel that we may be allowed to educate our own people in our own dialect in Primary Schools. All encouragement and recognition from the Government should be given so that we can develop our dialect into a language. The medium of instructions in the Autonomous District should be English in higher level.
7. We confirm our faith in Fundamental Rights as granted by our Sacred Constitution to every citizen of India. However, we feel to keep the Tribal way of life undisturbed, and thus the INNERLINE PERMIT system should be introduced.

"We the indigeneous peop[illegible] f Karbi Anglong Auto

nomous District of Assam recall the ideas of great Jawaharlal Nehru for the welfare of the Tribal people and are unanimous in our view that if some positive steps as suggested above are not taken to make our Hill District a real autonomous one, we shall have no other alternative but to opt out of Assam and seek your blessings to have direct access to the main stream of the Nation" (Das and Padmanabham, 1984).

Cultural Revivalism among the Ahoms

Original home of the Ahoms is said to be in the ancient Kingdom of Pong. Probably the word Pong is derived from Prong meaning "wide or great in Tai and which became as Pong" (Barua, 1978 : 12). The allied Shan tribes of Assam are the Khamti, the Phakiyal, the Khamyang, the Turung and the Nara (Barua, 1978 : 13). The Ahoms migrated to Assam before the Tais were converted to Buddhism. They maintained their traditional religion and language till 1397 A.D. The other Shan tribes of Assam are still Buddhists. Today the traditional Ahom language is known only to a handful of people belonging to the priestly class (Das and Gupta 1982). The *Ahom-Assamese English* dictionary published by G.C. Barua (1920) is a good source of information regarding Ahom language. The Deodhai, Ahom priests, continued to write the *Buranji* in Ahom language till the advent of the British (Barua, 1978 : 15). Hindu influence entered the Ahom court during the regime of King Sudangpha (1397 A.D.). The first Ahom King with a Hindu name was Jayadhvaj Singh during 1648-1663 (Barua, 1978 : 16).

With this introduction, we may now proceed to describe the cultural revivalism among the Ahoms, particularly through their several social and political organizations, including UARP, through which they are also claiming a 'separate state' for themselves.

The present Ahom movement for a separate state, originally started as a socio-cultural movement has grown out of collective efforts made over a length of time and has passed through different phases. While the first phase of the movement is found to have shown a pure cultural revivalist character, at present it has taken a political shape on the foundation of a socio-religious awakening and consciousness of solidarity among the Ahoms. The leadership of the movement in all phases of its development has been provided by the Ahoms. Several Ahom Associations such as the 'All Assam Ahom Association', the 'Ahom Tai Mongoliya Rajya Parishad', and presently the 'Ujani Assam Rajya Parishad' (UARP) have played important roles in the development of the movement, and their activities are integrated towards common goal of raising cultural, political and economic status of the Ahom people. The study of the revivalism cannot be made without considering the ethno-historical background.

The Ahoms, who are concentrated in three upper Assam districts of Sibsagar, Lakhimpur and Dibrugarh, form a distinctive population of Assam. It is generally accepted that the Ahoms are the descendants of the Shans or Tais of South East Asia (Gait, 1905, Bhuyan, 1949, Hall, 1950, Chatterjee, 1955). Apart from the Ahoms, the other segments of the Tai population of Upper Assam are the Khamptis, the Phakials, the Aitons, the Turungs, the Noras and the Khamyangs; and they all belong to the same ethnolinguistic group although each tribe has had its own dialect and distinct social customs. Besides these groups, the Chutiyas, the Kacharis, the Morans, the Barshis, the Miris and the Deoris form the other segments of tribal population. The rest of the population comprise of the caste Hindus, the Muslims and the immigrant tea-garden labourers, all of them form the minority groups in Upper Assam (Das *et al.*, 1982).

Ahom State Formation

The Ahoms came into Assam in 1228 A.D., and gave to the Brahmaputra valley "its ruling race for six centuries, this ruling race, which gave the province its present name of Ahom (Assam), being itself absorbed into their Hinduised or Hindu and Assamese-speaking subjects towards the end of this long period" (Chatterjee, 1955). Finally, the Ahom abandoned their tribal dialect in favour of Assamese (Gait, 1905) and today they only survive as a caste of Hindu Assamese (Chatterjee, 1955). A substantial number of Ahom people have, however, continued to use their own traditional language. The Ahoms are a Mongoloid people who had once occupied practically the whole of the North-eastern region of India. In fact the Ahoms, with the other Mongoloid people such as the Bodos, form the base of the present day ASSAMESE society and culture. In the past the North-eastern region received settlers belonging to the upper caste Hindus, and the Hindu caste system; and the process of *Sanskritization* In earlier times was a remarkably open one. Upward caste mobility was very much a reality in Assam (Prabhakar, 1974). Conversion of the 'aborigines' to Hinduism was undertaken extensively by the *Gosains* in Assam, and the whole practice has been described in the Census report of 1897.

The Ahom social system shows manifold stratification and Barua (1974) opines that the hereditary aristocracy, on the one hand, and specific occupation, on the other, helped in the growth of different *phaids* (clans) in Ahom society. Originally there were seven *Phaids* of Ahoms, which were known as Sateghariya (seven house) Ahoms. Among the first three one is of royal clan and the two others are of Buraghain and Borgohain clans. Others are the Mohan, Deodhai, Bailung and Chiring families of priest and astrologer classes. Besides these seven groups, numerous other groups and *Khels*

(service-class) emerged mainly on occupational specialization and functional basis, and all these developments paved way for a 'rigid class stratification'.

The foundation of the Ahom kingdom in Assam was laid in 1228 A.D. Since then the Ahoms had to deal with two kinds of tribes in Assam — the plains and the hill tribes. The plains tribes (consisting of the Morans, the Borahis, the Chutiyas, the Kacharis and the Koch) although retained their tribal customs and institutions but they did not live in isolation like the hill tribes. Consequently they were not outside the influence of Hinduism and other religious reform movements of the plains, such as *Vaishnavism*. The Ahoms, in dealing with these plains tribes applied force as well as diplomacy. When most of the territories belonging to these tribes were occupied by the Ahoms, the latter found very little difficulty in assimilating with them and maintaining diplomatic relations with the King of Koch-Behar and the Kachari King of Maibong and Khaspur as the Ahoms themselves were succumbing to the influence of Hinduism in course of time. As the number of the Ahoms was very small they found it impossible to maintain their gradually expanding dominion. Thus, to increase their community they assimilated members of both the plains and hills tribes into their 'racial fold' (Lakshmi Devi, 1968). The Ahoms generally followed the policy of conciliation and by their efforts they unified the land and people of Assam. The most noteworthy contribution of the Ahoms has been in the field of social and cultural life of Assam. The Ahoms were so powerful that "the kingdom they carved out for themselves came to be associated with their name as a nation" (Chatterjee, 1955).

The Ahoms had a deep sense of history. The Ahoms new history by their own word, *buranji*, and this word, with the art of history writing, was taken over by the Aryan-speaking Assamese,

probably from the 17th century (Chatterjee, 1955). This sense of history is, however, linked with a highly developed political sense which actuated the Ahoms to record the chief events of the reigns of sovereigns in officially ompiled *Buranji*. Besides the official chronicles kept by the government, the Ahom priests and leading Ahom families also possessed *Buranji* or histories which were periodically brought up to date. During the early period of Ahoms rule in Assam when the Ahom language was the mother-tongue amongst the Ahoms, the Buranjis were written in Ahom language. But later on, when the Assamese language came to occupy the place of mother tongue amongst the majority of the Ahoms, most of the *Buranjis* came to be written in Assamese and the knowledge of the Ahom language came to be confined to the *Deodhai* or priestly class amongst the Ahoms. The *Deodhai* priests continued to write the *Buranjis* in the Ahom language till the advent of the British (Lakshmi Devi, 1968). A number of Ahom Buranjis have been translated into English and Assamese by various Ahom scholars. The English translation of one such Buranji "From the earliest time to the end of Ahom Rule", by the late Golap Chandra Barua with the help of some Deodhai Ahom priest was published by the Government of Assam in 1930.

The History of Assam from 1200 to 1800 A.D. was characterized, on the one hand, by the stabilization of her people in its language and culture as an Aryan-speaking Hindu people under the leadership of the Ahoms, themselves originally of Sino-Tibetan Thai speech, and on the other, by the stiff and finally successful resistance which was offered by the Ahom rulers to Mohammedan aggression from Bengal. Some 450 years of efficient administration under the Ahoms brought to the peoples of Assam some sort of centralized, peaceful and orderly rule, which enabled various tribes to fuse into a single "Assamese-speaking nation

of medieval India" under the cultural leadership of the Brahmans and later of the Vaishnavas, which supplemented the military and political lead and organisation supplied by the Ahoms. Bit by bit, the Ahoms conquered the whole of the Brahmaputra valley, and brought under their tutelage not only their powerful Bodo predecessors and rivals in the land like the Chutiyas and the Dimasa (Kacharis), but also the hill peoples like the Nagas and the Mikirs (Karbi); they had also brought under their power their earstwhile rivals the Kacharis and the Khasis and Jaintias or Synteng s.

Socio-Cultural Consciousness : Some Factors

The Ahoms are very proud of the ancient historical ruins, monuments, Ahom *Buranjis*, records of history and legends of their state formation. One of the major objects of their revivalistic movement has been to restore their past glory and distinctive identity of Ahom language and religion. They feel that their language and distinct socio-cultural institutions which have been dominated, culturally and politically, by the outside elements need to be conserved and developed.

It is interesting to observe that in recent years the economic issues (particularly those related with the agriculture, labour problem, land alienation, rural poverty, indebtedness, urban and rural unemployment) have been prime factors responsible for the present social movement among the Ahoms. No doubt the existing socio-economic conditions and the emerging situations, in the context of the post-Independence developments, and the prevalent democratic set-up have substantially contributed towards the growth of such realization. As a result of this the Ahom movement in recent years is reported to have gained rapid momentum in both urban and rural areas (Das *et al.*, 1982).

The economic issues are dealt with in detail

in the memoranda presented by the Ahom leaders to the Prime Minister and the President of India in the years 1968 and 1969 respectively. The economic issues are highlighted and emphasised in order to justify the demand of a 'separate state within Indian Union'. It would be worthwhile to describe, in short, the major arguments narrated in their memoranda, which were also the major theme of the discussions held between the author and the Ahom leaders during 1976.

"The Ahom population, in general, is economically depressed and backward in educational development. The leaders feel that the problem faced by the Ahom people is in essence the problem of less developed community living with comparatively advanced group of people. A greater portion of the Ahom population is extremely poor. The developing economy of industrialization in Upper Assam has attracted a large number of people from outside. But this developing economy has not made much impact on the local population by providing job opportunities. As a result of this the little increase in state income and per capita income has not fully occurred to the people of the state but has considerably leaked out to *Immigrants* from other states. This has resulted in the paradox of the region being somewhat industrialized with the local people remaining ever backward as before".

"The leaders are of the opinion that about 50 per cent of the rural families live in chronic indebtedness and appalling poverty; the average income being barely sufficient to maintain the minimum level of subsistence".

"With the extension of the area of exploration for oil more and more agricultural lands have been acquired by the Government. The land holders have been paid compensation in terms of money, but have not been provided with alternative arable land for raising their food. This has made the villagers totally uprooted from the soil".

"The Ahoms feel that due to their illiteracy and simplicity they have been facing injustices and exploitations. There is resentment about the problem of land alienation, unemployment and the presence of the immigrants. The adverse socio-economic effects of recent urbanization and industrialization on local people with no hope for their economic protection and rehabilitation have brought a feeling of deprivation, discrimination and injustice" (Das *et al.*, 1982).

Emergence of New Consciousness and Formation of the Ahom Associations

The Ahoms have always been conscious about their traditional culture and thus aspire to restore their past glory and distinctive identity of language and religion. In fact a fairly long survival of Ahom language and culture has been instrumental in reviving the old Ahom glory and solidarity.

As early as in 1893 the first Ahom Association was formed. This birth of first Ahom organization, which was aimed at uniting the Ahom people on the issue of language and religion, and subsequent growth of several different Ahom Associations can be considered to be the basis of the present cultural revivalism among the Ahoms. Ahom leaders who played significant roles were late Surendra Nath Buragohain, late Rai Bahadur R. Handique, late P.N. Gohain Barua, etc. These leaders had led the Ahom Sabha, All Assam Ahom Association etc.

After the formation of All Assam Ahom Association in 1893 the Ahom cultural movement had passed through different phases. In the initial phase the movement was of a cultural nature. In the initial phase the movement was aimed at achieving broader Ahom solidarity, and to achieve this aim the contribution of earlier Ahom association had been great. This social consciousness of solidarity had gradually grown widespread and

emergence of the Ujoni Assom Rajya Parishad (UARP) in 1971 reflects the process of 'politicalization of a cultural movement' (Das *et al.*, 1982).

With the formation of Ujoni Assom Rajya Parishad in 1971 the Ahom movement had taken a definite turn. However, the movement had already acquired a political shape in the year 1967 when the Ahom Tai Mongoliyan Rajya Parishad (ATMRP) was formed. In fact the Ahom Tai Mongoliyan Rajya Parishad was an amalgamation of three Ahom organizations, namely, the All Assam Ahom Association, the Mongoliyan National Front and the Ahom Tai Rajya Parishad. No doubt the present Ujoni Assom Rajya Parishad has given a sense of political unity to the Ahom people, in seeking a political solution for socio-economic problems of the people (Das *et al.*, 1982).

"It is interesting to note that in recent years the Ahom leaders have participated in General Elections under the banner of the Ujoni Assom Rajya Parishad. This organisation, which has incorporated all the ethnic groups of Upper Assam districts in its fold, has continued to remain a non-violent agency demanding a separate state of Upper Assam".

Since the formation of the All Assam Ahom Association during British regime the movement has been well-organised both from structural and functional points of view. During the course of the development of the movement there emerged various other organisations which took the lead in different phases and programmes of the movement. The main organisations associated with the Ahom movement at different stages are:

1. All Assam Ahom Association,
2. Ahom Sava (Sabha),
3. Mongolia National Front,
4. Ahom Tai Rajya Parishad,
5. Ahom Tai Mongoliya Rajya Parishad, and
6. Ujoni Assom Rajya Parishad.

The All Assam Ahom Association was formed in 1893. Since then it voiced the discontent among the Ahoms. This association was merged with the All Assam Tai Sabha in 1964. Tai Sabha is basically a historical and cultural association. The Ahom Sava (Sabha) was very active during 1934-35. The aims and objectives of this association were to insist the Ahom people to take up a bold step in order to discard the roles of the 'Brahmins' from Ahom society and to revive the old Ahom social set-up. They passed the resolution regarding it and decided to launch an agitation under the banner of *Bamun Barjan* (Discard of Brahmins). The Ahom people were convinced that "the Hinduism is not their original religion"; it was introduced by the Ahom kings for the interest of their administration. The kings had also picked up the local Indo-Aryan language (Assamese) for the same reason. Subsequently the Ahom Sava started establishing local cultural associations, literary clubs and published magazines in order to mobilize public opinion. In 1935 a monthly paper known as *"Asom Bonti"* was published in which historical and cultural matters were discussed.

The Ahom Tai Rajya Parishad came into existence in the context of re-organisation of Assam in 1967. In the year 1967 the Government of India invited memorandum from different ethnic groups in connection with re-organisation of Assam, and consequently altogether twenty-two memoranda were submitted by different ethnic groups of Assam. The Ahom people realised the importance of the said 're-organisation of Assam' and owing to this situation there emerged the *Ahom Tai Rajya Parishad* which was followed by the formation of the Mongolia National Front. Till 1967 all the distinct Ahom organisations functioned separately but their aims and objectives remained identical. Although the individual Ahom organisations developed along their own ideologies; they witnessed change in leadership from time to time. Thus

there existed the scope for forming a common body which could combine all Ahom organisations and thereby represent the entire Ahom population on a single platform. Hence the formation of the *Ahom Tai Mongoliya Rajya Parishad* in 1967. This organisation was a result of an amalgamation of three Ahom organisations, namely: (1) 'The All Assam Ahom Association', (2) 'The Mongolian National Front', (3) 'The Ahom Tai Rajya Parishad'. However, this organisation could not exist for a long time and in 1971 the name of the organisation was changed to the *Ujoni Assom Rajya Parishad.* The main reason behind dropping the old title of the Ahom Tai Mongoliya Rajya Parishad was that the old name could speak for a few ethnic groups only and that the demand for a separate state is concerned with a 'geographical region' in which live a large number of ethnic groups. Thus a banner carrying the names of a few ethnic groups cannot be justified on logical grounds. The new banner of U.A.R.P. or the Ujoni Assom Rajya Parishad no longer provides the platform for the Ahom people alone; the movement acquired a territorial frame of reference, though the Ahom element remains most significant within the same.

Although we have not gone into the details of the organised tribal movements of the region, but we have seen in preceding pages that identification and re-identification of one's own group is tied with territorial and socio-political questions. In some cases expansion of identity may be viewed as an "adaptive mechanism", to meet special needs of changing circumstances, but it may be argued that 're-defining' the identity is also a positive development for integration of the tribal groups in the composite nation-state of India.

The Seng-Khasi : Cultural Heritage of the Khasis

Established as early as in 1899 the *Seng Khasi* has survived the strain of odd time and exists

today as the prominent cultural revivalistic movement within Meghalaya. It came into existence at a time when the Khasis were fast drawn to Christianity and the missionaries were actively patronized by the British. The progress of these developments including the westernization appeared to be a positive challenge to the traditional religion and culture of the Khasis. The *Seng Khasi* aimed at making the Khasis conscious about their own cultural heritage and attempted to publicise and preserve the religious and cultural usages. It started through a literary movement by Babu Jeebon Roy, Sibcharan Roy, Radhon Sing Berry and others. Gradually *revival* of traditional dance, sports, and music was also taken up by the Seng Khasi. *"The Shad Suk Mynsiem"* (Weiking dance), which was in colonial period under strong criticism, is being looked upon as a 'National festival' in the Khasi districts and the occasion is the annual district holiday, while 23rd November, the foundation day of the Seng Khasi is observed as a state holiday" (Bhattacharjee, 1979). In view of Jaswal (1982), through Seng Khasi "the ancient system of clan relationship has been strengthened, "which had received a setback after the large-scale conversion of the Khasis to Christianity. Some of the principles of the Seng Khasi are : (1) To adhere to old kinship principles through the concepts of *Kur* and *Kha*, (2) Consciousness of God, the Sovereign Lord, the Almighty Creator, (3) To develop both mind and body, (4) Encourage sports like archery and cultural dances, (5) Work for educational development, and (6) To foster sense of brotherhood among the Khasis, who still retain their socio-cultural and religious heritage" (Roy, 1979).

The Khasi scholar R.T. Rymbai describes the three commandments of Khasi religion as follows:

1. *Kamai ia ka Hok. Kamai* means to earr by one's own efforts and labour; *ia* is a preposition following a transitive verb anc governing an object noun; *Ka hok* means righteousness.

2. *Tipbriew-Tipblei. Tip* means to know; *Briew* means man; *Blei* means God.
3. *Tip-Kur, Tip-Kha. Kur* means maternal relations, *Kha* means paternal relations.

The Khasi-Pnars believe that God is omnipresent, nd omnipotent. A Khasi Pnar believes that when he dies his oul *(U-maina)* wings its way to God to be with the Nine Above; his body *(Karuth -Pyut)* when purified by fire, returns to mother earth (Rymbai, 19). The Khasi-Pnars are monotheistic. But they invoke God by various names according to the need of the moment, so they call him as *Lei-Long-Spah, Lei-Khyrdop, Lei Kharai, Lei-long-kur* etc. But when they invoke the name of God in general, they call him Blei, *Trai Kynrad, Nongthaw Nongbuh.* To a Khasi-Pnar, God has no gender at all (Rymbai, 19). The Khasi-Pnars have no fixed days of congregational worship.

Kynpham Singh (19) wrote that "when British came then Welsh missionaries also came". To combat the onslaught of the alien religion, U. Jeebon Roy, in 189 7, brought out his book, "Ka Niam *Jong Ki Khasi*" on reliqious rites and ceremonies of the Khasis. In the Preface to this book the author wrote "The people will completely forget (their religion) with the coming of the Christian Mission, . . . The poor religion of the Khasis without any written record will pass into oblivion and we will forget it one day completely". In 1900 Roy brought out another book, *"Ka Kitab ba Batai Pynshynna Shaphang Uwei U Blei"*, a first attempt by a Khasi to explain in simple language the religious concepts of the Khasis. U Rabon Singh also brought out three books. His last book was published in 1911, after his death. In this book he described the various religious rites and rituals of the Khasis, their science of divination and outlines of Khasi laws and customs. He also touched upon the concept of God, the Good and Evil and their interplay in everyday life. Other

Khasis who had written about their religion were H. Diengdoh, editor of *"U Khasi Mynta"*, the first secular paper in Khasi, which was started in 1896, U. Radhon Singh Berry, U. Rash Mohan Roy, the first Chairman of Sengkhasi, U. Sibcharan Roy and Dr. H. Lyngdoh. U.H. O. Mawrie is the popular writer on Khasi religion.

The Seng Khasi organisation bases its tenets mainly on writings of U. Jeebon Roy, U. Sibcharan Roy, U. Hormurai Diengdhoh and U. Rash Mohan Roy (K. Singh, 1979).

Cultural Revivalism among the Zeliangrong Naga

In case of the Zeliangrong cultural movement we find that this movement represents the renaissance of the Zeliangrong people. The religious cult established by Jadonang and developed by Rani Gaidinliu and their followers had also led to the development of an urge for solidarity among all people. The native spiritual beliefs and myths were useful in organizing struggle against the British. Jadonang and Rani had both helped in preserving and propagating the folksongs and folk-tales of the people. The cultural associations of Zeliangrong people are now trying to preserve and popularize the values of the old religion and culture among the Zeliangrong people. During the beginning of 20th century the social conditions and religious life of Zeliangrong people were at their lowest ebb (Kabui, 1974). Detestful treatment of the Hindu neighbours towards the backward hillmen and the advance of proselytising Christianity brought the darkest hour for Zeliangrong to defend and preserve their traditions and religious belief. At the same time their religion had been submerged in superstitious customs. At this time, a young Rongmei Naga, Jadonang, of *Puilon* (Kambiron) village of Tamenglong sub-division came back from his experiences of a soldier of First World War specially at Mesopatamia (Yonou, 1974) and gathered around him a large number of follo-

wers. Kabui is, however, of the opinion that Jadonang did not join the Army. It is said that he had spiritual powers and healing touches. Jadonang started a movement in 1925 to reform the traditional religion and preached a new cult of 'Haraka' which means 'not impure'. He preached one high God in place of many, asked for removal of many superstitious beliefs and customs, organised temples, introduced hymns and discourses and tried to unite the people on the prophecy of a "Kingdom of God" for the Nagas, particularly the three groups included in Zeliangrong. In 1927 he planned an underground movement with his trusted followers, particularly his first cousin, *Gaidinliu*, of the age of 13. Some authors (Fuchs, 1965, Yonou, 1974) have described him as a Messiah or a Saviour of the Kacha Nagas at the time of their distress. In any case the movement took a political shape on the foundation of a socio-religious awakening and consciousness of solidarity among the three groups.

Jadonang wanted (1) to revitalise and reform their traditional religious rites and beliefs in the face of advancing Christianity, (2) to reorganise and itegrate the tribes referred to as Kacha Nagas namely the Zemei, the Liangmei and the Rongmei (also known as the Kabui) and to remove inter-village and inter-tribal ill-feelings (Kamson, 1975), (3) as a logical step forward, to involve these tribal populations in an organised and united struggle against the foreign (British) rulers in order to achieve independence, and (4) to free themselves from the suppressing and exploiting rules and orders of the foreign administration and officials and to establish an 'independent Nagaraj'. Jadonang devised to reform the rigid religious practices mainly to strengthen the political movement with the maximum support of the masses. His ultimate aim was to wrest the political power from the foreign British rulers. He propagated that ceremonies prescribed by him would remove poverty

and sickness. He is said to have performed magical tricks. He kept two sacred pythons under his house which has been attributed to his attempt to create faith in his supernatural powers. His followers were called 'Khampais' (Yonuo, 1974). Reports about performing sacrifices, especially human (Rustamji, 1971, Yonuo, 1974), except 'Mithun', has been challenged by the present leaders of the Zeliangrong movement and the supporting evidence is not unequivocal. It has been suggested that "this was to prepare the ground for the political programmes taken up since 1927" (Mahadevan, 1974-75). Villagers from all corners of Tamenglong, North Cachar district had already started coming to his village 'Kambiron' to seek his advice and blessings. He mobilised his followers to create a climate of political action and with his trusted followers secretly planned and organised actions to overthrow the British rule. The programme was *(i)* to spread the idea of 'independence' for the Zeliangrong people, *(ii)* to raise funds, *(iii)* to purchase arms, *(iv)* to train up girl volunteers under the direction of his cousin Gaidinliu, and *(v)* to compose inspiring songs. The volunteers were trained to communicate and carry secret messages, use of code names, learning of inspiring songs and dances with political themes. The slogan was of the Naga Kingdom of *'Haomei Gongdi'*. The oral traditions suggested that the traditional names of Zemei, Liangmei, Rongmei, Maram, Mpumei, Kourang, Wainem and Toite are included in the word *'Haomei' or 'Hao-makam'*. Etymologically *Haomei* means people of the God and also cultured people.

By 1930 when the plans and programmes had reached almost all Zeliangrong villages, the villagers were asked "to disobey unjust laws and to stop paying taxes" (Kabui, 1974) The programme of civil disobedience was influenced by Gandhiji's movement at the national level at that time and Jadonang's song in Gandhiji's honour also inspired

the people. Jadonang finally asked all able bodied men to prepare for fighting the British Government with 'dao' and spears, keeping the whole plan a secret. But it did not immediately succeed due to Jadonang's arrest and execution.

Yonuo (1974) comments that "Jadonang's programme of movement was synthesis of animism and Hinduism involving human sacrifice and infidel contempt for Christianity". Jadonang is said to have "had a dream in which the deity asked him for human sacrifice and his followers promptly caught hold of some traders and brought them to a temple near Nungkao" (Singh, 1972). But this is the only case often cited even in administrative reports of that time on which plea Jadonang was executed. The other version based on the story current in the people's mind suggests that Jadonang was not present in his village Kambiron on the night the villagers killed these four outside traders as a result of annoyance due to their litting fire on a 'genna' night, violating a taboo. Jadonang is reported to have reprimanded the culprits (Kabui, 1974).

Fuchs (1965) comments that "Jadonang promised to liberate the people from the yoke of both Kukis and British and that the programme outlined by Jadonang was that all Kukis, their arch enemies, would be massacred". Yonou (1974) states that Jadonang's followers set against loyal subjects of the British Government and compelled others to convert themselves to oppose Christianity and to denounce the British empire as well as the Kuki intruders from southwest and northeast. Thus there might have some basis of suggestion that the movement was also aimed partly against invaders, but according to the present leaders (personal communications) there is no feeling of enmity with Kuki tribes now.

The movement aimed at preservation and reformation of traditional religion and social systems for the benefit of the Zeliangrong and the village

elders who were also the religious heads of the village on their own saw in advancing Christianity an attack on their traditional privileges and powers and in order to defend their position they are reported to have attacked the Missionaries and the converts (Namtheiurei, 1970, Mahadevan, 1974-75). However, it is not universally accepted that the Jadonang's movement was anti-Christian (Kabui, 1974).

After the execution of Jadonang, Rani Gaidinliu took the leadership to translate the former's political objectives into reality. She used Gandhiji's name and the Jadonang's song on Gandhiji in her programme and told the Zeliangrong people that the British would soon be driven out by Gandhiji. The Congress workers of Cachar district had close contacts with the movement (present leaders personal communications). She went underground to direct and organise the rebellion, could collect funds and volunteers from a large area within and outside Manipur. She moved about cautiously with piloting of *Masang of Kepelo*, her agent, who did his best to keep her movements and whereabouts a complete secret. She was given protection by the villagers and she never remained for long at the same place and moved by night. An elaborate saga had meanwhile grown around her name to the extent that she could elude her captors through her magical powers appearing in several places at the same moment (Rustomji, 1971). Troops were baffled as she was rumoured always to be at a dozen of places at once. She had her agents who moved at Kohima and other places and watched the movements of Assam Rifles engaged against the movement. She was constructing a huge wooden fort in October 1932 in the Pulomi village for accommodating about 4000 armed followers and she declared that in next three months either herself or the British government would win. Apparently she was preparing for crucial battles when the British Government forces could arrest her

by surprise attack. She had decalared, "we are free people, the white men have no right to rule over us. We will not pay house tax to the Government. We will not obey their unjust laws like forced labour and compulsory porterage subscription" (Panmei, unpublished). The support of freedom movement was gradually increasing and neighbouring Maram and Mao tribes were also under her influence. The Rani Gaidinliu's movement and struggle was mainly located in Trans-Barrack Basin. When the British Government forces were making a vigorous search for Rani Gaidinliu, when girls with her name were being cross-examined, she took a code name of "Deleuliu". Every man and woman of the area of the movement must have been sympathisers of the movement which frustrated the efforts of the Government to catch her and declaration of prizes and tax-relaxations for ten years for submitting information did not bear fruit (Mukherjee *et al.*, 1982).

The movement was obviously very well organised with a well-trained disciplined band of guerilla volunteers who were inspired with the ideal of overthrowing the foreign rule, and the derogatory remarks of the commentators such as 'ruffian' or 'mob action of every crook and gangster' (Bower, 1950) are not objective in their nature. Undoubtedly the Zeliangrong people at large believed in what she said and revered her as a Goddess incarnate. She headed the religious cult of *Heraka*, after Jadonang, and was its high priestess (Rustomji, 1971). She was spiritually inspired and used to bring religious songs apart from her own compositions from the Bhagaban Cave or Bubon Cave, where she met Jadonang earlier (Panmei, unpublished).

Her declared aims has ever since included social integration of the specified three kindred tribes and preservation of traditional culture, customs and usages of the Zeliangrong people, and freedom and socio-economic development

of the people. She herself used with meticulous care traditional dress and ornaments when this author met her during 1985 in her Kohima residence, and at Haflong in 1988.

During the long period of her imprisonment the Rongmei (Kabui) organized the Kabui Samity in 1934 at Imphal to preserve their customary law. A typed copy of four to five pages was the only document about the aims and objectives that could be traced by the present leaders of Manipur. When it was renamed as Kabui Naga Association with a new Constitution in 1946, the declared goal was political, economic, social and educational upliftment of Zeliangrong people. This developed into the Manipur Zeliangrong Union and became active with the objective of having a separate administrative unit for the Zeliangrong people of Manipur Tamenglong area, the Zemi areas of North Cachar Hills and the Zemi and Liangmei of Southern part of Naga Hills district. This was later renamed and developed into a more active body as Zeliangrong Naga Union with division into similar units, which were formed in Cachar, Haflong and Tamenglong areas, with minor differences in their programme but with the major objective of the 'separate administrative unit' remaining common.

Meanwhile, in 1947, some leaders formed the Zeliangrong council with the objective of a separate administrative unit. The Naga of Manipur held a convention in 1957 and demanded the repeal of village authorities set up by the Hill Areas Act, 1956, and return to old tribal/village authorities.

By 1956 the Naga movement had been intensified. During 1960-66 Rani Gaidinliu had to go underground to defend herself and her Heraka cult under the growing pressure from Naga underground movement. Around 1969 she had strongly supported the move for a separate Administrative Unit and thus she had submitted memoranda to

Prime Minister in 1969 and 1972. As a matter of fact during 1966 the sufferings of Rani were felt at central level and with the instruction of Prime Minister, earlier in 1966, rigorous search was made to find her out. She was then awarded a *Tamra-patra* by the government of India.

Present Status of Zeliangrong Movement

The militant phase of this movement had declined with the Independence of India. Rani Gaidinliu's national recognition was natural. It was Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru who had accorded the symbolic title of "Rani" to Gaidinliu for her contributions. She could thus come in close relationships with Shrimati Indira Gandhi and present Prime Minister, Shri Rajiv Gandhi, who has shown concern for Rani's problems. This author has recently submitted a detailed report. through Director General, ASI, on the 'Zeliangrong', to be used by the Prime Minister's office. For preparing this report this author conducted intensive fieldwork in three States of Manipur, Nagaland and Assam and consulted Rani Gaidinliu at Haflong (during January-February 1988) and Prof. Gangmumei Kabui at Imphal. The main objective of this report was to explore the cultural, eco-geographical, economic and anthropological dimensions of Zeliangrong area of North-East India.

It may be stated that the Zeliangrong movement has touched almost all aspects of the life. It has restored faith and pride in the traditional values and customs while foresaking superstition and 'animistic' practices which overburdened the people and prevented their social consciousness. In its course the movement has not only revitalized the music and folk-dances to a great extent but has also resulted in the creation of innumerable songs and publication of some of them. The Gandhi song which was popular during India's freedom movement among the Zeliangrong people is reproduc-

ed below, with English translation.

GANDHI-SONG

(Zeliangrong song in honour of Mahatma andhi)

"Apao Gandhi Chawang Thiugong Kine
Mathiu Riga Wang Kine
Chari Ngam Wang Kine"

Grand-father, Gandhi, is becoming a new ruler
People begin rejoicing
We are winning the battle.

"Chawang thiu banlo mahina riga
Thiuflu bamlo paringting
Charing ngamjiu bamblo paniu kadi mai
Pakiangna Riga
Kumak Jiu Maihang ga
Thiumilo Mathiu Riga Lungbopiu."

Long Life be his,
Let him conquer all hearts,
Never be under any, but
be always above all.

(The English translation of this song was made by this author at Haflong (Assam) with the help of Rani Gaidinliu and Shri D.H. Zeme, the Bible translator, during January-February, 1988).

SEVEN

ETHNICITY AND ETHNIC CONFLICT IN NORTH EAST: CURRENT TRENDS

Defining 'Ethnic Group' and 'Ethnicity'

To comprehend fully the meaning of ethnicity it is imperative to discuss the meaning of the term *ethnic*. The anthropologists use this term to describe "a social group which consciously shares some aspects of a common culture and is defined primarily by descent." The term ethnic is part of a family of terms of similar or related meaning such as "minority group", "race" and "nation" and it is not often easy to make sharp distinctions between them. Race generally refers to a group that is defined by common descent and has some typical physical characteristics. Race tends to refer to the biological aspect of group difference, ethnic to a combination of the cultural aspect *plus* a putative biological element because of the assumption of common descent. Race then refers to something more purely physical than ethnic group. There are two important social forms that are not ethnic groups. One of them is the political community, the state and its members. The other social form being one's social class.

The Americans very often call a state a "nation", but in most European languages the nation refers very specially to the ethnic group, the state to the formal political organisation which grants citizenship. The close link between nation and

state arose because in course of European history, and in particular in the 19th century, with the rise of nationalism, every nation demanded its own state. This led to the creation of modern Germany and Italy, the formation of Ethnic European States (*i.e.* Bulgaria, Serbia, Albania) out of the Ottoman Empire, the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian Empire into its ethnic components, each organised as a State. The United States use the term 'nation' to refer not to an ethnic group but to all who choose to become Americans.

Thus the ethnic group refers basically to the vertical divisions of a society in contrast to the horizontal divisions. The horizontal divisions refer to class, the vertical divisions to *ethnicity*. Keeping in view the interplay between the ethnic group and the state, on the one hand, and the relations of ethnic group and social class, on the other hand, that we witness the development of ethnicity as a problematic force both at the intra-national and inter-national relations. It is relation between state and ethnic group that concerns us here. Of the several new states in Africa and Asia many do not form states of given ethnic groups. In India we have witnessed a concern with 'nation-building', which is complicated by existence of old lines of division, religious, racial, caste-based linguistic and tribal.

Several centuries ago ethnic groups belonging to Mongoloid stock had entered North-East India mainly through eastern and southern directions. On the other hand, the Caucasoid elements had entered this region from Western direction. From an early date, there had been intermingling of distinct ethnic groups belonging to these stocks. The Mongoloid, who are divided into several tribal segments, form the numerically dominant section of the people. The caste Hindus (in Brahmaputra and Barak valleys) ethnically belong to the Caucasoid stock. Among some caste groups of Assam the Mongoloid elements are also discernable. The

presence of Austroloid elements are also reported in a few population groups (personal communication Arabinda Basu).

Over the centuries the Mongoloid groups had intermingled with local groups as also within themselves, thus producing tremendous biological diversities.

Absence of complex networks of kinship and marital alliances at wider territorial levels, which are typical features of caste societies, had helped the natives to preserve their basic ethno-cultural characteristics and retain their distinctive self-identities *vis-a-vis* their neighbours. This was the case more particularly in vast hilly terrains and foothills areas.

In Brahmaputra valley the cultural systems and ethnic entities were to opt for a distinct direction, particularly under the *Vaishnavism* cult. During colonial and post-colonial periods the processes of interaction and intermingling between different ethnic groups was intensified and thus there developed a complex and vibrant pluralistic society in North-East India. The segments of Mongoloid stock which came to be recognised as tribes of various sorts emerge as true ethnic group of India.

Ethnic Unrest in North-East

In North-East India the politics has generally followed the ethnic path. Ethnic-cultural mobilization and ethnic movements launched by various ethnic groups in the region remain on-going processes. The predominance of tribal population in the region and their perpetual involvement in politicizing their socio-cultural demands through variously launched 'tribal movements', (the actions initiated under which are reported from time to time in regional and national press) cannot be all covered and analytically discussed in a single volume. With the change of time old movements have

changed or marginally altered their objectives. Many ethnic groups have launched entirely new types of movements. In some cases several tribes have united to fight for demands under a single politico-cultural banner. Today in Assam the Karbis and the plains tribals, who had no organised and united pan-tribal political platform in seeking fulfilment of their demands, have emerged as strongest factor in ethnic politics of that state. As pointed out in our earlier chapters the plains tribals had played significant role in shaping the Assamese society but gradually many of these groups launched organised movements to *desanskritize* or re-tribalize their customs and life-styles. In case of Assam situation, Bhagabati has rightly stated that "revivification of the tribal past helps in cultural resource building for ethnic-political movements". In the tribal districts of Assam the demand for state-hood has a long history. The Ahom movement launched under the banner of Ujoni Assom Rajya Parishad (Das *et al.*, 1982), the Udayachal-state demand of the Bodo, launched originally under the banner of Plains Tribal Council of Assam (during 1960s), and the Karbi movement under their student leaders and public leaders have revived, changed, altered and ramified their actions and movements. The Zemis of Assam, as part of *Zeliangrong* ethnic component, continue to press for their demands of a common ethnic name and a 'separate state'. The All Bodo Students Union is fighting for creation of an Union Territory along the north bank of Brahmaputra for the tribals, and constitution of district councils in Bodo dominated areas on the south bank. The 'United Tribal Nationalists Liberation Front', mainly led by the Bodo Kacharis, demands creation of what has been called a 'tribal land' more or less in the same region of Udayachal (the land of the rising sun). Yet another organization, the 'All Assam Tribal Students Union', in a bid to unite all tribes of Assam with a common demand for autonomy

has proposed a 'federal structure' for the state in which all communities and tribes would get due recognition (see Bhagabati, 1988). In the two hill districts of Assam, fairly strong agitations have been launched, since 1986 in particular, demanding creation of an autonomous state, under the provisions of Article 244-A of the Constitution of India. The leaders of these agitations or movements, in order to pressurise the Government have submitted memorandum, staged rallies and demonstrations in tribal areas as well as in national and state capitals, and they have given call for *Bands*, *rail-roko* and road blockade.

At this stage it is imperative to critically examine the historical and socio-political factors and developments which became responsible for ethnic unrest in North-east. We shall also discuss the current statuses of several ethnic movements in anthropological perspective.

Most of the books available on ethnic conflict in North-east remains uncritical as far as anthropological perspective is concerned. Works of K.S. Singh (1982), S.K. Chaube, A.C. Bhagabati, S.C. Sinha, B.K. Royburman, V. Rao and a publication of Build documentation centre are some of the important sources of information, which help us to reconstruct the processes of crucial socio-political formations and ethnic conflict. We cannot depend on a set of fixed typologies to visualize the tribal movements. The conditions, roots and characters of the movements in North-east are vastly different. In most cases there are attempts to highlight one aspect of the problem, either the insiders' perspective or the outsiders'. Till recently one section of scholars stated that the Assam and Manipur problems are of the comparatively better-off plains people refusing to take the tribals into account. In the same areas the tribal elite have been trying to assert and re-assert themselves in very forceful manners, in recent years, for a fair deal.

Ethnicity and ethnic movements in the region are products of definite historical factors, some of which are (1) distinctness of ethno-social formations in isolated locations, (2) apprehension of being subjugated by plains people ('outsiders', 'Indians', 'Hindu-Muslim', etc.), at the time of Independence, culturally and economically, (3) specified administrative measures (Inner line etc.) introduced by the British and growing Westernized life-style through education and contact with 'foreign religious' missionaries had inculcated a sense of 'separatism' in the minds of emerging tribal elite, (4) partition of the country, etc. These and many other factors had separately or jointly forced the leaders of different ethnic groups to choose the path of separatism. We shall describe below the historical conditions giving rise to ethnic movements in different states and their present statuses.

Aurnachal Pradesh

Arunachal Pradesh (land of the sunrise) covers a hilly tract and its population is predominantly tribal. According to 1971 Census scheduled tribes formed 79 per cent of the population. Elsewhere in this volume we have described the ethnic composition and emerging identities among the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. Aurnachal Pradesh, which was earlier known as NEFA (North East Frontier Agency) was placed directly under the administration of the Union Government in 1948. It became Arunachal Pradesh with the status of an Union Territory and was formally inaugurated in 1972. Nearly 46 per cent of the population is engaged in agriculture with 166,838 hectare under cultivation, 20,566 hectare developed under permanent cultivation and area brought under cultivation 22,661 hectare. Annual food production was 92,000 tonnes with additional increase in foodgrains of 20,000 tonnes. The traditional method of jhuming

is the main form of agriculture. Terrace rice cultivation is done in valley areas and terraces on hills. The main crops are maize, millet, wheat and mustard. Forest area covers an area of 61,000 sq. km. and reserved forest covers an area of 45,116 sq. km (B.D.C., 1980). There are no major industries in the territory. Principal medium and small scale industries are forest-based. The Union Territory had the literacy rate of 11.9 per cent which is expected to have considerably risen by now. By 1976 the territory had only 622 primary schools. During April 1980 a 48 hour *bandh* was called by *All Arunachal Pradesh Students Union.* demanding :

"(1) Withdrawal of trading licence and land allotment permits from non-Arunachalis.
(2) Removal of refugees.
(3) Checking infiltration of 'foreigners'.
(4) Affiliation of college at Pasight to North Eastern Hill University."

Through government sponsored schemes a tribal elite has emerged which is now entering into new professions in Arunachal Pradesh. Tribal elite and student activists have launched movements and demonstrations in recent years in organized manner. They have contact with movement leaders in other states.

Assam

Assam covers an area of 78,523 sq. km. The area under food crop covers 72 per cent of the total cultivated area. The principal crop is rice. The main cash crops are jute, tea, cotton, oil-seeds, sugar-cane, potato and fruits. Tea cultivation in the State covers an area of more than 80 per cent of the total net area sown. The State is rich in mineral wealth like coal, limestone, clay, dolomite, oil and natural gas. The tea industry

plays an important part in the economy of the State. There are nearly 705 tea plantations in the State. Assam has oil refineries and new petrochemical complex is coming up. The other industries are sugar, jute, silk, paper and plywood. The important cottage industries are handloom, sericulture and the manufacture of cane and bamboo articles. Assam has about 1.62 million hectares of reserved forests and 1,229 million hectares of unclassified forests. The historical developments in Assam have been described elsewhere in this volume.

In 1821 tea was discovered by an Englishman in Assam and the Governor-General William Bentinck took steps to create a tea industry in Assam. One major obstacle in creating a tea industry in Assam was the lack of an adequate local labour force. For the local Assamese cultivators there was little incentive to work as low income wage labourers in unhealthy jungle terrain, for they were comparatively prosperous with sufficient amount of land (B.D.C., 1980). A system of contract labour was established, the British recruited indigent tribesmen from the hill areas of 'Southern Bihar', the labourers were indentured to their employers. By the turn of the century there were 764 tea gardens, employing 400,000 persons and producing 145 million pounds of tea annually (B.D.C. 1980). The number of labour migrants to plantations further increased gradually. Many of the tea garden labourers adopted Assamese as their mother-tongue. The 1931 Census showed 14 lakhs tea garden labourers in Assam. In 1971 Census there were 30 lakhs of tea garden and ex-tea garden labourers who spoke Assamese. This has drastically altered a traditional definition of Assamese culture and society.

Early in their administration the British sought to make use of high ranking officials from the Ahom Government, especially for revenue administration and the judiciary. But these officials" did not fit into the Anglo-Mughal administrative

structure created by the British in Assam" (B.D.C. 1980). In 1961 "nearly a million of the seven million people living in the Brahmaputra valley were Bengalis. Fifty seven per cent out of the 75,000 persons involved in transport, storage and communication were migrants. One-third of all persons listed by the census as having other service occupations were migrants" (B.D.C., 1980). Based on some old census reports, Build Documentation Centre Report (1980) suggests that "of 913,000 urban dwellers in Assam, 350,000 are Bengalis, whereas only 304,000 are Assamese. In 1961 the Census Commissioner estimated that 221,000 Bengali Muslims had entered the State in previous decade. . . . The 1981 Census reported only 4,877 migrants from Rajasthan". As North India's major traditional traders, the Marwaris played an important role in opening Assam to trade. Today the Marwaris could be found even in smallest of towns of Assam as also in Assamese villages. The Nepalis are found in all districts of Assam, their major concentration being in Darrang and Dibrugarh districts. They are grouped in several categories, such as, "(1) the forest settlers since Ahom Kingdom, (2) ex-Gorkhas who were settled by the British, (3) the third group of ex-Gorkhas rehabilitated by the Government of India. They have been engaged in agriculture, dairying and as watchmen. Then there are Nepalis who entered Assam till 1976 (B.D.C., 1980), and then those who entered Assam with or without Restricted Area Permits. Then there are still those who have allegedly entered Assam from Bhutan. Then there are a large section of such Nepalis who keep coming and going back after seasonal employment". Thus summing up, tribals of peninsular India became the labour force in the tea gardens. The British managed these gardens with the help of Marwaris. The Bengali Hindus generally dominated the administrative structures and initially constituted the professional classes in the towns. The Bengali Muslims developed

the virgin lands and forests, the Nepalis came as herders and rubber tappers and cultivators, artisans came from Punjab, peasants from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. For an agricultural labourer in Bihar, a wage in tea industry represented a real opportunity but this did not hold true for an Assamese peasant."

After the Independence of India the educational and occupational facilities expanded in Assam which gave rise to an Assamese middle class. When the State government declared Assamese as the state language and the medium of instruction in schools the conflict arose between the Assamese and the Bengalis as well as the Tribals (Bodo, etc.).

Under these ethno-historical and economic conditions emerged the prolonged drama of agitations, movements and ethnic unrest in whole of Assam. Initially the Bodo and the Bengali populations launched agitations against the language policy. The Bodo opted for themselves the Devnagari script.

In recent years the 'Udayachal' movement of the Bodo has been re-intensified with further *Band, rail roko*, etc. The Karbi leaders, from time to time, had shown their anger over language issue or over the reorganisation of the states, but their students have recently organised themselves into a sort of strong political body for the first time. The Karbi Students Union (KSA) shot into prominence in June 1986, when along with the newly formed 'Autonomous State Demand Committee' (ASDC), it launched the movement for the formation of a *separate state* comprising Assam's two hill districts — Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills. This movement is stated to be launched in view of provision under Article 244A of the Constitution. During the anniversary meeting of KSA in July 1987, about 5000 delegates (*Telegraph*, July 29, 1987) pledged to fight for *hemprek* (home in Karbi language). Both the KSA

and ASDC resolved to intensify their agitation from August 15, 1987. It is stated (*Telegraph*, July 29, 1987) that : "ASDC leaders have rejected the GNLF chief's offer for a co-ordinated agitation in the hills of Assam and neighbouring West Bengal. The GNLF and Jharkhand Mukti Morcha had sent feelers through Shri B.K. Basumatary, Chief of the United Tribal Nationalists' Liberation Front (UTNLF)". Mr. Basumatary is currently leading a *movement* for a "tribal land" for the plains tribesmen of Assam and he admits being in touch with the GNLF (*Telegraph*, July, 29). The president of the 'All Assam Tribal Students Union' (AATSU), Dr. R.K. Pegu stated that there is a clear understanding between his organisation and ASDC. Leaders of these organisations have signed draft agreement to lead a joint action. Organisations spearheading similar movements should all evolve a clear standard, feels Dr. Pegu.

The Karbi students meeting of July 21 was significant because it witnessed coming together of leaders of organisations with divergent stands on the demand for a separate state, such as AASU (All Assam Students Union), NSF (Naga Students Federation), AATSU, KSO (Kuki Students Organisation), AJYCP (Asom Jatiyatabadi Yuba Chhatra Parishad) and ASU [Angami (Naga) Students Union]. Mr. Boro, General Secretary of AASU, stated that 'The Karbis and the hill tribals in general have been neglected by the successive governments in Assam during 40 years of Independence and it is very sad that the peoples' government led by the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), even after more than a year in office, has not yet seriously gone into the actual problem of the hill tribals, their grievances and needs" (*Telegraph*, July, 29).

Manipur

Manipur has an area of 22,356 sq. km. About 90 per cent of the State area is made up of hills.

The rest being plains land. Manipur valley is about 1920.sq. km in area. Manipur had an almost uninterrupted political history from the first half of the first century A.D., when the Manipur Kingdom was founded. The Meitei existence is now said to be more than 2,000 years old. Even with British existence the Manipur king continued to rule with internal autonomy. Even when Manipur became a 'Vassal State', the Meitei continued to resist foreign domination. The people's hero named Paona Brajabasi continued to lead the masses. In memory of this hero, and others who lost their lives for resisting the outside influence, even to this day the Meitei observe *Khongjam* day. Until 250 years ago the Meiteis were not Hindus. They had their own religion, customs and traditions. Martial art was a unique feature of their culture.

The advent of Hindusim dates back to about 250 years ago when a Hindu named Santi Das arrived. Santi Das met King Tamheiba of Manipur and succeeded in converting him to Hinduism in 1714. It was later through Army help that the King is said to have converted the masses. In recent years however a forceful movement to revive the old religion, culture and language is launched by the Meiteis of Manipur. We have described about the cultural revivalism among the Meiteis elsewhere in this volume.

Manipuri is the major language which is spoken by 65 per cent of the population. Several tribal dialects are spoken by people living in hilly areas. According to 1971 Census the Hindus constituted 58.97 per cent of the population, the Christians constituted 26.03 per cent and the Muslims constituted around 7 per cent of the population. In general, the Hindus are mainly the Meitei majority, Bengali and north Indian traders and labourers. The Muslims are generally Bengali. The tribals generally form the Christian segment of population. For the Meiteis, all those who are neither Meiteis nor local tribals are *Mayang* or "outsiders".

Soon after Independence of India there were high hopes in Manipur along with the rest of India for quick economic progress. The general condition of some segments of population has been improved but a large segment of population still remains generally poor. The communication link between Manipur and rest of country remains as tenuous as ever.

Agriculture dominates the economy. Paddy and maize are main crops with rice accounting for 90 per cent of agricultural production. Manipur valley however also produces vegetables in large scale. After the fourth plan an increased amount of land has been brought under Japanese methods of cultivation with double cropping, green manure and better seeds in the valley to increase production. The gross irrigated area is 14,485 hectares. The food production in 1976-77 was 2,49,000 tons. The state had attained self-sufficiency in food grains in 1977. Cultivation is carried out on very small holdings, nearly 1/3 of the population, or 31.91 per cent cultivate holdings between 1.25 and 2.50 acres. Large holdings above 10 acres hardly number 200 in the valley (B.D.C., 1980).

Between 1961 and 1971 the number of agricultural labourers rose from 2,184 to 13,525 while a large number of direct producers were reduced to subsistence level. The five hill districts with 90 per cent of states area have a subsistence economy with *jhuming*. The gradual increase in population is making hill men return to plots and destroy jungles earlier than conventional *jhuming* which had a cycle of 10 years. About 2000 hectares of land are brought under *jhuming* every year causing ecological disturbances, and grain shortage.

Majority of industrial units are based on small scales. The handloom industry is the most important industry in the state, carried on mainly as household industry by women folk. The other small

scale industries include carpentery, blacksmithy, embroidery, brickmaking, tailoring and cutting, goldsmithy, repairing and servicing of vehicles etc. A huge hydro-electric project called the Lok Tak project was started over ten years back. It is meant to generate 70,000 kWh of power, irrigate 24,000 hectares and reclaim 17,000 hectares.

Several factors are responsible for general social tension that prevailed in the past. Saha (1982) reported that "socio-politico-religious upheaval in Manipur is rooted in the activities of its dominant group, the Meitei, whose representatives ruled the state for a long time and whose elite feel that the distinctiveness of Manipur was diluted by their fore fathers' efforts to implant a *Vaishnava culture* amongst them. Such thoughts can be discerned among the two sub-groups, the Gouriya and Sanamahi. The former are adherents of *Gouriya Vaishnavism* and the latter group are all for a nativistic type of movement." Naorem Phulo pointed out in 1935 that the Manipuris had their own scrip containing 35 alphabets. He wrote several books, describing the original religion of the Meiteis. His three important followers later took up the lead and popularized the movement which has been called the *Sanamahi* movement. The Sanamahis not only exhorted their followers to shun *Vaishnava* rituals and follow the traditional way of life, but also revived the institution of *Piba* which had been lying dormant. The movement also received support from the traditional non-Brahmin Pandits who produced many old sacred texts (Singh, 1969). The Sanamahi factor also worked in the context of outsiders (Singh, 1982). The Gouriyas call themselves Meitei and they define the term by various methods. The most popular of these is that they are the descendants of the god Sanamahi. the Sanamahis are said to have been gaining ground among the educated people in Manipur.

During past decade people's Liberation Army (PLA) was very much active. It continues to be

active in several areas. Three members of this 'outlawed' organisation were arrested by the Manipur Police on April 30, 1988 according to *Amrit Bazar Patrika* (May 5, 1988). This newspaper also reported that PLA men were trained in the NSCN headquarters in Upper Burma and came back recently to Manipur. With their arrest, the Manipur police claims to have established the identity of those who were involved in planting seven powerful bombs at Khongjom on April, 23 and the assassination of an executive engineer in Thoubal

Efforts are being made to track down the insurgents. The Manipur police raided important PLA hideouts in Imphal, Thoubal and Bishenpur. A number of collaborators who had been giving food and shelters to the insurgents were also taken into custody. So far about 40 PLA activists have been arrested (*Amrit Bazar Patrika*, May 5, 1988).

Meghalaya

Meghalaya was created under the Assam Reorganisation (Meghalaya) Act, 1969 of Parliament passed on December 24, 1969. It was inaugurated by the-then Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi on April 2, 1970 as an autonomous state. It was made a full-fledged state on January 21, 1972. The main languages spoken are Khasi, Garo, and Jaintia. Rice, maize and wheat are main crops. Citrus, pineapple, bananas, peas and plums are grown in large areas. Main cash crops are potatoes, jute, cotton, mustard, arecanut, ginger, turmeric, and black pepper. There are a large number of small industrial units. Major mineral resources are coal, limestone, sillimanite, dolomite, fireclay, quartz and glass-sand. The contact with the British brought in great socio-economic and religious change in the lives of the local people. Capital Shillong (unlike several protected areas) was never sealed off and grew into an English cantonment

and soon barracks, schools, churches and hospitals flourished. Several groups of people have come to stay and work in the State such as Bengali, Assamese, Nepali, Marwaris, Biharis and Punjabis.

Mathur (1970) has shown that "the Khasi were not immune from the forces of Westernization as also the currents and cross-currents of Indian politics". The same author has also stated that "the growth of nationalism (among the Khasi) had found expression in 1923 when the Khasi National Durbar, the first political party was formed". When the federation of Khasi States was formed in 1934, the traditional leaders, including the chieftains, demanded establishment of an independent relationship between the Khasi States on the one hand, and the princely states of India on the other (Mathur, 1982). It was in a meeting held in Tura in 1950 that Rev. Nicholas Roy made unsuccessful efforts for formation of an Assam Hills Tribal Union. The conference was attended by men like Capt. W. Sangma and Mr. Phizo. The formation of the Eastern Indian Tribal Union in 1954 welded together the hill people of the Khasi-Jaintia Hills, the Garo Hills, Mikir Hills, Cachar Hills and Mizo Hills. The E.I.T.U. swept the polls in 1957, and joined the Government of Assam. But when the Assam assembly introduced a bill to declare Assamese as the State language, the E.I.T.U. M.L.As., including Capt. Sangma, resigned and formed the All Party Hill Leaders Conference in July 1960. APHLC had the following objectives :

1. To fight against Chauvinistic tendencies,
2. To promote national and emotional integration,
3. To retain English as a national language until the Hill people are ready to accept Hindi,
4. To fight for a separate full-fledged state within the Indian Union (Mathur, 1982).

In Meghalaya there has emerged a tribal elite which has more in common with the Indian urban middle class. The political leaders of the state generally belong to this elite section. The Garo National Council also had the same objectives as adopted by the APHLC. In recent past thousands of so-called 'illegally' settled Nepalis were sent out of Meghalaya in the wake of agitation launched by the Khasi students.

Hajongs : Deserve a Fair Deal

The Hajongs, an off-shoot of the Bodo tribe, live in both sides of the International border. In the Indian Union they inhabit in Meghalaya, Assam and also in Arunachal Pradesh, according to *Shillong Observer* (June 1, 1988). It says :

"In Meghalaya while the percentage of literacy among the Khasis and Garos, according to the 1971 census respectively, are 28.70 and 23.51 per cent, among the Hajongs the literacy rate is 20.35 per cent."

"But this backward scheduled tribe virtually goes unrepresented in the State Government services both in Assam and Meghalaya, nor any help or assistance coming from the State Governments so long, for the development of their culture and heritage. Most of the educated Hajong youngmen join private schools, that too mostly non-deficit, as teachers for their livelihood."

"On 8th May, 1988 the Meghalaya Hajong Welfare Association submitted a memorandum to the Chief Minister of Meghalaya, Purno A. Sangma, enumerating some of their long standing genuine grievances for redressal. The memorandum says that, unfortunately, "No reservation of posts of services in favour of the Hajongs, in connection with the affairs of the Government of Meghalaya, has yet

been made or outlined similar to such reservation specifically made for the Garos, Khasis and Jaintias. As a result the Hajongs of Meghalaya have been feeling deprived and disintegrated."

It may be mentioned that in Meghalaya there are no reservations of jobs specifically made in respect of small tribes like Hajong, Koch, Rabha, Bodo-Cachari, Dalo, Lalung, Karbi etc. In Garo Hills Hajongs are said to be second biggest tribe after the Garos.

Hajongs : Demand for Job Reservation

The memorandum pleaded for three per cent job reservation for the Hajongs in district level and twenty per cent in State level. It also pointed out that in the Meghalaya State Secretariat not a single Hajong is an employee and requested the Chief Minister that in case of vacancy an unemployed Hajong graduate be appointed there.

The memorandum, while recognising facilities presently available in respect of education as quite encouraging, pointed out that most school buildings are not in proper shape and have no sufficient rooms to accommodate the ever increasing number of school going children in Hajong habited areas.

For the improvement of education it demanded "adequate building and hostel grants be sanctioned for all ME and HE schools located in Hajong populated areas. Provision for normal training to the untrained teachers serving in Assamese and Bengali Medium schools be made so as to enable them impart better education. The memorandum demanded immediate sanction for deficit-grants-in-aid be accorded to five Middle English and three High English Schools. It also demanded necessary grant-in-aid for another High English School and two other M.E. Schools in Hajong area.

The memorandum brought to the notice of the Chief Minister the difficulties faced by the

Jabongs in getting Scheduled Tribe Certificates from the authorities. In this connection they referred to the procedure adopted by Assam Government, where scheduled tribe certificates are issued on the recommendation of the recognised tribal organisations without going through police verification.

The memorandum also highlighted the scarcity of drinking water in those area; and even in places where water pipe-line had already been laid no water supply was made. So is the case of rural electrification. The memorandum pleaded for setting up two model villages in each block to provide better facilities. It also sought for financial assistance for all the registered clubs and Women organisations in Hajong areas.

The memorandum pointed out that inspite of great sympathy shown in the national level not a single member of Hajong Tribe, who are disabled or handicapped ever considered for financial assistance.

As Hajongs are primarily agriculturists, the memorandum demanded better irrigation facilites, power tillers and high yielding seeds at subsidised rates. Besides adequate loans for Fishery owners, long term co-operative loan for business and livestock farming and for absorption of Hajong youths in Meghalaya State Transport Corporation are demands enumerated in the memorandum.

Addressing the Hajong Conference at Zekabari, Garo Hills, Chief Minister P.A. Sangma assured the minority ethnic groups residing in the state that they would be given "full protection" by the Government. He said that in national context Khasis, Jaintias and Garos are minorities, Centre therefore provided them with all possible safeguards. "Now it is our responsibility to protect the minorities in the State. We will give full protection to them" he added (*Shillong Observer*, June, 1, 1988).

Nagaland

Nagaland, the sixteenth state of Indian Union, was inaugurated on the 1st December, 1963. The state of Nagaland has an area of 16,579 sq. km. The altitude of state capital Kohima is 1,463 metres (4,800 ft.) above the sea level. The state is bounded by Assam in the North and West, by Burma and Arunachal Pradesh in the east and Manipur in the south and runs more or less parallel to the left bank of the Brahamputra. The topography is very severe - full of hill ranges which break into a wide chaos of spurs and ridges. The altitude varies between 194 metres and 3,048 metres. Most of the Naga villages (thousand and odd) stand at 1 to 2 thousand metres high altitude. It is very typical of the Nagas to build their houses on the hill-tops and at higher elevations. The highest peak in the state, Saramati in Tuensang district, is 3,840 metres (12,598 ft.) high.

The population of Nagaland, according to the 1981 census is 7,74930. Out of this 84.49 percent of the population is rural. The average density of population is 47 per square km. Workers constitute 45.79 per cent of the total population of the state, 41.99 per cent of the population is literate. The most important activity is agriculture which occupies 72.36 per cent of the working force. Besides agriculture, people engage themselves in weaving, blacksmithy, and other handicrafts to meet their daily requirements during off season but not much for commercial purposes. There is no appreciable manufacturing activity in the state.

The population of Nagaland is almost entirely tribal. There are many separate tribes with their distinctive languages and cultural features.

The Naga Movement

A major pehnomenon which generated the Naga

movement was the growing discontent among Naga tribes due to their inability to adjust themselves to the emerging socio-political situations on the eve of Indian Independence and the impending withdrawal of British administration, which they thought gave them a measure of special protection and some privileges. Traditional Naga leaders (village and clan elders) and educated Naga elite among the different Naga tribes became apprehensive of loosing their existence and emerging composite Naga ethnic identity.

Elsewhere this author wrote that "the origin of the present Naga movement could be traced first to the formation of *Naga club* in the year 1918 at Kohima with a branch at Mokokchung. The Naga club was the first and the only Naga organization then, theoretically involving all the Naga tribes. The Naga club had submitted to the Simon Commission a memorandum, the main theme of which was a prayer for keeping the Naga hills outside the scheme of reforms and continuing the direct British administration of the (Naga) hills. Among other things the memorandum also said that the Naga languages were quite different from those of the plains people and they have had no social affinities with the 'Indians' - either Hindus or Muslims."

This memorandum was signed by twenty tribal representatives. The text of the memorandum (see Das, 1982) makes it abundantly clear how "group consciousness of Naga solidarity and common identity had already grown among these people". The next landmark in the historical background of the Naga movement was the formation of the 'Naga Hills District Tribal Council' in April 1945, which became Naga National Council in 1946. The NNC (Naga National Council), as the political forum of the Naga tribes, could be considered "to be both the origin and the beginning of the modern phase of the Naga movement. It gave a sense of political unity to the Naga

tribes and it introduced the concept of the Naga nationhood" (Das, 1982).

The objectives and goals of the NNC were limited in the initial period. In a 4-point memorandum submitted during June, 1946, the NNC had demanded greater autonomy for the whole of Naga hills within the Indian Union, with special safeguards for the Nagas and a separate electorate. But in their next memoranda during 1947 the NNC opted for an Interim Government for the Naga for 10 years, with full legislative, judicial and executive powers, except defence, after which they would choose their own government. The goals of NNC at that time could be seen more specifically in the 9-point agreement reached between the NNC and the government, during June 1947, which included protection from land alienation, certain administrative autonomy and a special responsibility of the government of India for their implementation.

At this juncture of modern Naga history came a turning point because a strong extremist ideological leadership had emerged within the NNC wanting not only the recognition of their absolute right to chart out their future course, but also to opt for a 'sovereign state'. Since the understnding on such conditions was not easy to reach a section of Naga 'declared themselves independent on 14th August 1947' (Das, 1982, also see Aram, 1974 : 84). From 1947 to 1954 the Naga hills remained comparatively quiet and no violence was resorted to. It is reportedly stated that the NNC president had held a 'plebiscite' on the issue of 'Naga independence', in support of which 7,000 men and women gave their thumb impressions. In the first general elections (1951) no Naga filed nomination and not a single Naga voter turned up. In 1954 so-called *Hongkin government*, 'People's Sovereign Republic of Free Nagaland', was announced. In March 1956 a 'Naga Central Government' was set up. In the same year the Naga Peace Organising

Committee was formed and in the next year, the Naga Church leaders gave the call for peace. In 1957 first Naga Peoples Convention was held, which recommended that the Naga Hills District and the Tuensang area should be amalgamated. This came into effect in December 1957. In May 1958, the Second Naga People's Convention was held. A liaison committee was appointed to contact the underground with a view to bringing about a political settlement. In October 1959 the Third Naga Peoples convention was held wherein it was decided to propose that 'Nagaland' might be made into a separate state within the Indian Union, under the External Affairs Ministry. In July 1960, a 16-point agreement was reached between the then Prime Minister, Pandit Nehru, and a Naga delegation. On 1st August 1960 the Prime Minister Nehru announced in the Parliament the decision of the Government to create the 16th State of India in the shape of 'Nagaland'. The state of Nagaland was inaugurated by the then President of India Dr. S. Radhakrishnan in December 1963.

These developments ultimately paved the way for emergence of a new 'overground' Naga leaders, who formed the Nagaland Nationalist Organisation (NNO). There also emerged an overground 'rival' group who formed the Democratic Party of Nagaland (DPN). This party harboured sympathy for the 'secessionist', 'insurgent' underground Naga.

Till 1968 several rounds of talks were held between the 'militant' section of the Naga and the Government of India. In 1968 the underground segment had broken into two groups, federal government and revolutionary government. During 1969 several rounds of talks were held between 'revolutionary' group and the government.

Formal talks with Naga leaders began in 1964 at Chedema. These efforts to establish peace culminated in the signing of the Shillong Accord, 1975. It envisaged acceptance of the Indian Consti-

tution by all Naga as also surrendering of all arms etc. by 'rebel' Nagas.

Since the signing of the Shillong Accord, Nagaland had remained an oasis of peace for a long time. Though Phizo and many others had repudiated the Shillong accord but there had been no resumption of 'insurgency'. A section of the Naga even today feels that there could be no final settlement without the involvement of the father figure of Phizo who is now a British national.

During last one decade or so the major developments may be summarized as under: The 'hostile' now remain divided into these camps, *(i)* pro-Phizo Federal Party and *(ii)* the group led by Mowu Angami. A third group that has been most active in NSCN. T. Muivah and Isak Swu of 'National Socialist Council of Nagaland' (NSCN) are strong supporters of Maoist ideology. Fighting between pro-Phizo and Muivah-Swu groups had been rampant in recent years. The schism between the two is now complete.

According to *Sunday* (14-20 Feb. 88) "the Centre has succeeded in breaking the back of the Naga insurgency by playing up tribal differences. The Centre has sponsored the breakaway of the Sema tribals from underground and then ensured that the Shillong accord would drive a permanent wedge between the (dominant) Angami leaders and the smaller fringe tribes that are supporting the last of the Naga 'rebels' under the banner of the Nationalist Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN). The Naga 'insurgency' consequently is on the decline today".

Mizoram

The Mizo hills was brought directly "under the British administration about the year 1894-95. Alongwith this came the Missionary work in Aizol. In addition to bringing abut the expansion of personality through the opening up of newer horizons,

the schools were a factor in undermining traditions and customs and in producing disorganisation in the accustomed habits of life. Consequently much of their traditional festivities and merry-makings were given up. But the trend is being reversed to some extent during the recent years. The younger generation has shown desire for a cultural revival. Folk dances and music are in their initial stages of resurgence. The three main festivals "Pawl Kut" (harvest festival held in December), "Mim Kut" (the festival in honour of the dead in which the first crops of maize and vegetables are presented in September) and "Chapchar-Kut" (or the spring festival) held in March, are gradually being revived and are on the holiday list of the District Council. "Tlawmngaihna" is also re-asserting itself side by side with Christian ethics" (Nag, 1967)

Mizoram is a predominantly tribal state. The major tribal segment is that of the Lushais. The other tribes are Pawis, Paites, Raltes, Phanging, Hmars, Kuki, Maras, Riangs, Chakmas and Tipras. Mizoram covers an area of 21,087 sq. km the population is 332,390 and the literacy rate is 53.70% (B.D.C., 1980). Gross cropped area covers about 70,000 hectares and net area sown is 9,000 hectares. Total net area under permanent irrigation covers about 2,500 hectares of land. The principal crop of Mizoram is paddy, and other crops are maize, cotton, groundnut, *til*, potato, ginger, orange, lime and tea. People mostly depend on shifting cultivation. There are no big industries in Mizoram. Cottage industries are many. People produce woollen carpets, cane baskets etc. There are over 100 permanent and 90 provisional cottage industry centres and over a dozen weaving centres. All these must have increased in number considerably since the present figures are based on a 1980 report.

One of the important political forces which led to the Mizo movement was Mizo National

Front which developed out of the Mizo Famine Front which had been formed in 1959 in Aizawl. It was Mr. Laldenga, who took leadership of the famine relief and later changed the name of front and considerably altered the character of the organization. "Laldenga propagated that the Mizos belong to a separate nation than that of the *vais* (plainsmen) and had a political right to self determination. . ." Laldenga organized a militant group of Mizos, called Mizo National Army, and systematically mobilised the people for unity among all Mizos" (Goswami *et al.*, 1982). A Peace Accord has since been signed and Mr. Laldenga has become the Chief Minister of Mizoram (now a State) through the election process.

Tripura

In recent years there has been attempt by several underground movements, leaders to unite themselves to form a 'sort of a pan-Mongoloid federal set-up'. Briefly one may say that currently the most worrisome movements in North-East are the TNV 'insurgency' in Tripura, NSCN movement and the Gorkhaland problem in Darjeeling. The fear of loosing livelihood, land and 'cultural identity' has given birth to TNV actions. Because of continued activities of TNV the Disturbed Area Act was extended in whole of Tripura on the eve of the 2nd February, 1988 Assembly polls.

The State of Tripura has its own story of tribal unrest. The princely state of Tripura had merged with the Indian Union on October 10, 1949. First major influx of Bengali 'refugees' started in 1951. In 1952 first election to the Territorial council of Tripura was held. 1964 witnessed influx of refugees again and 'communal' riots. In 1971 Tripura became a state. During 1975 general elections the TUJS (Tripura Upajati Juba Samiti) secures four seats. Then organising secretary of TUJS breaks away to form TNV (Tribal National

Volunteers). In 1980 TNVs go underground and set up headquarters in Chittagong Hill Tracts. In 1982 general election TUJS gets 8 seats. During 1984-87 there was escalation of TNV violence and declaration of it as 'unlawful'. In February 1988, the Congress(I) assumes power from the CPI(M). In May, 1988 TNVs convey willingness to sit for discussions to the State Governor, Gen. K.V. Krishna Rao. During June-July 1988 discussions with TNVs takes place at official level. Ultimately, on 12th August 1988, a Memorandum of understanding ending 'insurgency' in Tripura is signed. Thus TNVs ensure that they do not resort to violence. They agree not to extend support to any other extremist groups by way of training, supply of arms or in any other manner. Government agrees to rehabilitate the 'underground activists'. Under the agreement it is decided that 'measures will be taken to prevent infiltration from across the border', the R.P. Act, 1950 shall be amended to provide for reservation of 20 seats for tribes in the 60 seat assembly of Tripura. It was agreed to restore the alienated lands of tribals, redraw the boundaries of autonomous district council area, increase of tribal programmes in radio, self-employment of tribals It was also agreed to rehabilitate at least 2,500 *jhumia* families in five centres. It was also agreed to make conscious efforts to effectively implement the provisions of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution in so far as it relates to Tripura (for details, see *Telegraph*, 13th August, 1988).

Bodo Tribal Homeland

Welcoming the Central Government's effort in bringing about the *Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council Accord*, the All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU) of Assam has demanded a similar intervention by the Centre for the creation of a tribal homeland on the north bank of the Brhamaputra, according to *Amrit Bazar Patrika* (28 July, 1988). The area

of the proposed tribal homeland would be 25,4781 square kilometres and would extend from the Sankosh river near Srirampur in the west to Sadia on the east. This territory will have West Bengal on its north, Assam in the south, and Arunachal Pradesh in the east. This area would consist of two present districts - Kokrajhar and Lakhimpur, and the eight sub-divisions of Dhubri, Goalpara, Barpeta, Nalbari, Kamrup, Darrang, Tezpur (Sinitpur), Majuli and Sadia.

The All Kachar-Karimganj Students Association (ACKSA) of south Assam has extended its solidarity to ABSU movement. The ABSU leaders, such as Mr. U. Nath Brahma, feel that as a first step to mobilise mass movement in support of the tribal homeland and against police atrocities and "Assamese chauvinism" (ABP, 28 July, 1988), the ABSU and the ACKSA have given a joint call to observe the 41st Independence Day as a 'Black Day'. The ABSU charter of demand contains 99 points. But to draw the attention of the Union Home Ministry and to mobilise a mass struggle, the ABSU has been pressing for three primary 'political demands' (ABP, 28 July, 1988), such as creation of a tribal homeland as an Union Territory, District Council for the south bank of Brahmaputra and the inclusion of Bodos in the Karbi-Anglong Autonomous District Council with tribal status.

The United Tribal Nationalists Liberation Front, spearheading a movement for a separate homeland for the plains tribals of Assam, had called a 12 hour *Bandh* in tribal areas of Assam on 28 July, 1988.

G.N.L.F.

The tripartite agreement (between Union Home Minister, West Bengal Chief Minister and GNLF Chief) on the Darjeeling Hill Council Bill was signed on 22nd August.

The demand for a separate entity for Darjeeling was initiated during 1909. Though documents relating to Hill Council Accord are yet to be signed, July 25 will be 'a Red letter day' in the history of Darjeeling. Mr. Subhash Ghishing is congratulated by the Darjeeling people for providing an 'Indian identity' to the Gorkhas. The people feel that acceptance of a Hill Council was the first step towards statehood, like in Nagaland and Mizoram (ABP, July 28, 1988). "The eviction and deportation of thousands of Nepalis from Assam among other things made GNFL Chief to fight for the Gorkhas. Earlier Pranta Parishad had initiated the move. Despite being a novice in politics, Mr. Ghishing, in only six years time mesmerised his people and did something concrete."

The following are some of the provisions of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council Bill :

(1) The management of any forest being a reserved forest, use of canal or water course for agriculture.
(2) Health, sanitation.
(3) Tourism and vocational training
(4) Public Works Development and Planning, Roads, etc.
(5) Transport and development.
(6) Preservation of livestock, animal husbandry.
(7) Water irrigation, fisheries, markets fairs.
(8) Education, Primary, Secondary, building.
(9) Small scale and cottage industries.
(10) Taxes on entry of goods, use or sale therein, tax on advertisement. Taxes on goods and passengers, tax on professions.
(11) Control and supervision over panchayats, town area committees and municipalities.
(12) Land, Land revenue, micro- and mini hydel projects (*Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 28 July, 1988).

ETHNIC UNREST : THE FUTURE TRENDS

It is now being reported that after the solution of GNLF and TNV problems, the Manipur underground activists have agreed to surrender themselves and join the national mainstream. It appears that several new directions are going to be adopted by the leaders of ongoing tribal movements of North-east, particularly the Karbi and the Bodo.

According to the *Indian Express*, (New Delhi, Sept. 25, 1988), "The current political turmoil in Burma has already begun to have an impact on the bordering North-Eastern States amidst reports that various insurgent groups operating from across the border are re-grouping and that there has been a sharp increase in the smuggling of narcotics and drugs, according to well-informed sources.

The almost total withdrawal of the Burmese army from near the border with India and its induction into the power struggle in Burma has provided a breather for the insurgents and smugglers who are reported to be having a field day. Sources have warned that the delay in a solution to the political crisis in Burma would have serious repurcussions in the bordering states while any outcome of the crisis would be important from the point of view of India's security.

The National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN), which had been passing through a difficult phase with reports of serious power struggle within its ranks is believed to have resolved its crisis. The vice-chairman of the underground organisation, S. S. Khaplang is stated to have usurped power with the help of the dreaded "lieutenant" Livingstone. Reports filtering in from across the border also indicate that the NSCN supreme T. Muivah and the chairman of the organisation Isaac Swu have been "expelled" and are probably in China. The proposal of a joint operation of the Indian and the Burmese army against the NSCN and

other such organisations has also been shelved in view of the developments in that country.

Informed sources have also reported that an attempt is being made to set up a "joint front" of the various insurgent organisations operating from the Burmese territory. These include the NSCN, the United National Liberation Front (UNLF), the People Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (Prepak), the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) and the Peoples Liberation Army (PLA). These organisations, the reports add, have decided to cooperate with each other and coordinate their "operation".

Besides the insurgents, the drug-peddlers and smugglers are believed to be having a free hand and have stepped up their activities. It is a well-known fact that the smuggling of narcotics from the "golden triangle" is mainly carried out through the border with Manipur and Mizoram. The addiction to drugs in the two North-Eastern States has already reached a serious level.

Some of the assorted insurgent groups, including those pitted against the Burmese government, survive on the smuggling of narcotics and jade which abounds in the northern parts of Burma. In the event of a weak government in Burma, these groups are expected to increase their illicit activities.

Nearly 50 per cent of the area in Burma has always remained under the control of various insurgent groups within that country. The most powerful of such groups, the Kachin Independent Army (KIA), virtually rules the entire northern part of the country. While getting tacit support from China, the KIA had also been helping some of the secessionist organisations against India. The Burmese Communist Party is well-entrenched in the North Eastern parts".

EPILOGUE

In sharp contrast to peninsular India, the societies and cultures of North-East India, which are predominantly tribal in character, have demonstrated a rare capacity to survive. Relative isolation and exclusiveness had influenced the perpetuation of tribal social formations. In the valley areas, however, every ethnic group had generally belonged to one of the (dichotomous) categories of 'tribe' *vis-a-vis* 'civilized' as a result of distinguishable ethno-historical processes. Our analysis of pre-colonial ethno-political processes and transformation has revealed that the name of ancient Assam - Pragjyotisa - was closely associated with the place name Kamarupa, river-names Brahmaputra/Lauhitya and Kamakhya, the name of pre-dominant deity of the region. The local scholars have located the derivation of these words in tribal idioms. The name Pragjyotisa is thus found to have been derived from an Austric phrase : Pagar - juh (jo) - tic (c' = ch), meaning 'a region of extensive hills'. The *Kalika puranas* point to the prevalence of the solar cult and fire worship in the region, and widely celebrated Assamese festival Bihu is said to be associated with fire worship and fertility rites, the relic of a vanishing Austric and Alpine - Iranian culture in ancient North-East.

This region had thus experienced (particularly in valley areas) the synthesis of tribal (Kirata/ Mongoloid) and literary cultures from early times.

Sanskritization of pre-sanskritic rituals, such as Kamakhya cult, and transformation of important place and river names as also of several dialectical phrases are all analytically linked with the process of state formation. But, the *sanskritization* as a structural-functional and cultural mobilization process (*cf.* Srinivas, 1952) had little impact over the common people. Hinduization process remained confined to royal families. The Mongoloid ethnic formations had thus got perpetuated. A borrowed Indo-Sanskritic language could be established however as a major link language in the Brahmaputra valley under state patronage. The Assamese language that emerged through localization and by imbibing tribal phrases provided unity, strength, cohesion and vigour to Assamese social structure, which consisted of several ethnic elements, including tribal.

The Assamese social structure in certain areas had followed the Khel based principle of social groupings, instead of the ideal caste system. Under Khel system the occupational and functional groups were provided with distinct socio-economic and military statuses. Members of each Khel used a specific title. This system articulated itself into a rigid social stratification ultimately. The Khel groups were internally structured through clan-lineage and other principles of groupings.

Gradual emigration of peasants and artisans had affected the technology and other aspects of agricultural production but these factors could not generate the *jajamani* system of socio-economic relations (which is an inseparable part of caste system in rest of India). Many incoming peasant and occupational castes had rather adopted the dominant local and tribal rituals and customs. Tribalization process operated in different areas in varied degrees. At the same time local/tribal folk-tales and rituals had come to be associated with norms and rituals of pan-Indian Hindu 'great tradition', such as transformation of Karbi folk-

tales into *Karbi-Ramayana.* The penetration of Hinduism and particularly the caste system was partly checked by the influence of Shankar Deo, the great social-reformer of Assam, who spoke against the caste system and its related institutions.

Our analysis in preceding chapters has shown that distinguishable ecological, cultural, ethno-political and historical processes had generated three major types of polities in North-East India : "tribe", "chiefdom" and "state". While we could successfully apply and establish the 'concept of tribe' in case of several social groupings, particularly in terms of segmentary/non-state social structures, we had problems in critical application of terms such as 'chiefdom' and 'state'. Our analysis showed that tribal structures, in few cases, had imbibed certain structural and politico-jural elements of chiefdoms, and several chiefdoms had exhibited crucial elements of state structures at particular points of time. These fluctuating conditions and dynamic processes which we narrated are comparable with the 'societies', oscillating between two polar types (in terms of varied modalities of political system), described by Edmund Leach (1964).

A revolution had taken place within social anthropology around 1940 whereby new theoretical and methodological procedures were adopted in studying kinship structures and models of relationships that regulated these structures. These crucial developments led to a better definition of the "political field" and a better understanding of its diversity. The sub-discipline of political anthropology had thus been established. One important contribution of these theoretical/methodological developments was identification and explanation of 'segmentary societies' (the so-called stateless societies). The ethnic boundaries of segmentary societies are generally distinguished and well-defined. In these societies social structures are examined from the point of view of the ideas concerning the distribution of power between

persons and groups of persons and political units within the social structure are identified. No social anthropological work in North-East India (or in rest of tribal India) has reckoned the significance of the model of segmentary system. Only one exception in this regard, however, is F.G. Bailey who has examined some aspects of segmentary character of the Khond tribal society of Orissa. Based on the Ph.D. thesis of this author (Das, 1985a) the detailed information and discussion on the segmentary social structure of the Zounuo-Keyhonuo Naga have been provided in preceding chapters mainly to highlight the fact that the segmentary social structures do operate and continue to exist in parts of North-East on account of several sociological and historical factors which help us to identify the true and real tribal societies as structural systems, chiefly based on descent, genealogical, ritual, territorial, kinship and politico-jural principles. We found that these systems survived as structurally viable and exclusive systems which could not be disturbed either by the colonization or the post-colonial forces of change. We also discovered that non-kinship factors are responsible for giving shape to the 'tribes'. Myths and folklore provide cohesion to the tribes. Outside such segmentary social frameworks there are societies whose traditions, institutions and myths provide them multiple patterns emerging within single social structure observable and demonstrable through kinship and politico-jural principles. They belong to different places in our general developmental scale falling between 'tribal' stage and state formation.

There is yet another area of social reality demonstrable in each type of social structure and political system. This is the area of social stratification which has remained most neglected area of sociological and anthrpological research in North-East India and elsewhere. In preceding chapters (particularly in Chapters 3, 4 and 5)

we have described and discussed the dimensions and elements of stratification and inequality both anthropologically and historically as also in twin terms of traditional and modern ethno-political contexts. We observed that the clans and identical social groupings operate within an *hierarchical* order involving unequal statuses and an unequal share in exercise of power in both state and non-state societies. Outside the framework of kinship there are 'institutions' which assume political significance in crucial manner even among the 'acephalous tribes'. Thus among the Zounuo-Keyho-nuo Naga the age-sets set up relations of solidarity and authority which could not be disturbed ufder colonial and post-colonial situations. It was possible for the individuals in this society to acquire the statuses of 'bigmen' - men of pre-eminence - by redistribution of 'surplus food' such as rice, rice-beer and meat among the kins and non-kins. As we discovered the essential purpose of these instituted age-sets and 'prestige-gaining feasts' had been directed towards establishing social stratification.

Though no radical transformation was observed at social structural level during colonial era but the tribal names had come to be articulated and recognized in administrative circles. A jural identity of tribe had emerged. But in many cases, as we have tried to show in Chapters 6 and 7, ethnic boundaries and self-identities in post-Independence era had come to be re-defined and re-structured in the context of emerging and fluctuating ethno-historical, administrative and geo-political situations, mainly to highlight and emphasize the socio-cultural, linguistic and religious distinctiveness among the tribes and the non-tribes, and among the hidlsmen and the plainsmen. A need to seek perpetuation and preservation of such historically evolved ethnic identities had caused ethnic unrest and tribal movements of various sorts, which we described in detail in Chapter 7.

Tribal 'chiefdoms', 'chieftainship' and 'autonomous tribal systems' of the North-East were generally not disturbed or destroyed during the colonial period. But they had been definitely reduced to a *conditional existence*. From 1937 onwards, for example, the Naga hills, Mizo hills, North Cachar hills and the North Eastern Frontier Tracts were called as 'excluded areas'. An 'Inner Line' prevented the entry of non-tribals (non-local) into these areas without permit. This regulation continues to be in operation in all areas (except in N.C. Hills). Tribal chieftains, village 'headmen' and 'elders' were recognized and appointed as *gaonburas* (village-elders) and *laskars* with governmental authority. Dispute settlement in all areas were done through tribal laws. In fact tribal laws and tribal mode of governments had been fully protected by the British. In some areas territorial authorities were imposed and some areas remained under their traditional chiefs, such as *Syiemship* in Khasi hills, which was not a part of excluded area.

However, in order to rationalize the mode of tribal government in some areas the British brought about a precise regulation of duties, taxes and tribute. These innovations were not introduced necessarily to counteract tribal polities. But abrupt implementation of these and similar regulations in tribal areas had given birth to *tribal unrest* in many places. Tribal chiefs also came forward at times to protest against the British policies. Here one may refer to the story of U. Tirot Singh, a Khas) chief, given under Appendix in this volume. The Kuki revolt (1917-19) was united under the chiefs who opposed the British policy of (forced) recruitment (for military purposes) during the World War I, which had seriously threatened the viability of the labour-short Kuki economy (Bhadra, 1975). The 'Zeliangrong' movement was a counter-product of the British colonial rule and the British apathy towards the Zeliangrong Naga tribes of Manipur, Assam and Nagaland,

during and after the Kuki rebellion of 1917. Around 1925 Jadonang had launched an ethnic movement with the basic objectives (1) to revitalize and reform their animistic religious rites and beliefs in the face of advancing Christianity, (2) to unite three culturally allied tribes, Zemi, Liangmei and Rongmi; and (3) to establish an autonomous "Nagaraj". Jadonang stated a new religious cult called as *Heraka* whose followers came to be known as 'Khampais'. Jadonang, with the help of Gaidinliu, mobilized his followers to create a climate of political action and planned and secretly organized campaigns to overthrow the British rule. Jadonang's programme of requesting villagers to disobey unjust laws and civil disobedience was influenced by the national freedom movement led by Mahatma Gandhi. Jadonang-Gaidinliu movement, which became the only movement in North-East to have established contact with India's national freedom movement, had marked the end of the violent phase of tribal movements during the British colonial period in North-East. In the year 1987 this author held discussions with Rani Gaidinliu and other top leaders of Zeliangrong movement and collected data from Zeliangrong villages in Manipur, Assam and Nagaland in order to prepare a comprehensive anthropological report and detailed map of all villages of these people.

The hill tribes of the North-East had become apprehensive of loosing their economic resources (land, forest) and political rights and privileges which they thought they had enjoyed under the measures of special protection and privileges adopted and provided by the British (Das, 1982). The fear of interference and exploitation by the plainsmen ("Indians") and the assumed danger of encroachment upon their cultural autonomy were linked with the fear of loosing their distinct "ethnic identities", the consciousness of which had been politically encouraged by the British and other agents of colonization

Development and spread of education in vast

tribal areas of the region was mainly achieved through Christian missionary activities. The missionaries had helped the first generation of the educated tribal elite to articulate themselves as a viable group. Through adoption of Christianity, English education, the British support and experiences gathered through Army, police and civil services this nascent middle class had provided political orientation to emerging anxiety, fear and aspirations of the tribes.

Thus, in 1923 a Khasi tribal pastor Reverend J.J.M. Nicholas Roy had formed the 'Khasi National Durbar'. In 1946 a Christian Garo, Emongsing Sangma, had formed the 'Garo National Conference' (Majumdar, 1982). The 'Federation of Khasi States', formed in 1934, consisted of chieftains. They demanded enhancement of their powers. Around same tiee educated leaders had formed 'The Khas) States Peoples Union', and 'The Khasi-Jaintia Federal States National Conference'. Rev. N. Roy made serious efforts in 1950 for formation of 'The Assam Hills Tribal Union', which was attended by Phizo and Capt. W.A. Sangma. The formation of 'The Eastern Indian Tribal Union', in 1954, brought together the hill people of the Khasi-Jaintia Hills, the Garo hills, the Mikir hills, the Cachar hills and the Mizo hills. These developments paved the way for formation of 'The All Party Hill Leaders' Conference' in 1960. The Eastern India Tribal Union opted for a single 'Hill State' in North East (Mathur, 1982). The Naga leaders had shown general apathy towards these developments and they had followed the path of 'separatism', as we have described in Chapter 7.

In 1921, Mahatma Gandhi had visited Darjeeling areas. The Hillmen's Association had been formed in Darjeeling at that time. A 'Hill People's Social Union' was established under British patronage in Darjeeling in 1934. It's main purpose was to unite the Nepali, Bhotia and Lepcha. We find that the Nepali educated elite, since the colonial

period, have played significant roles in seeking all round development of Darjeeling hill areas. The concept of *Gorkhaland* was product of such developments. Designating the Nepali as the 'foreigners' in North-East (Assam, Meghalaya) if recent past had helped the Nepali to revive the old demand for the creation of a "Gorkhaland" (under the GNLF). The rise of sons of the soil phenomenon lay behind the Rajabansi demand for the formation of the *Uttarakhand* in North Bengal. The Uttarakhand leaders had maintained contacts with leaders of Assam movement who were fighting against the foreigners (Singh, 1982 : 374-75). The GNLF continued its agitation and ultimately succeeded in acquiring "regional autonomy" if the shape of a "Gorkha" (ethnic) council with administrative powers.

Consciousness of ethnic identity, tribalism and ethnicity continue to perpetuate in North-East because the ethnic groups and their problems continue to survive. Strongly linked with the ethnic group's search for self-identity is an urge for a better deal.

APPENDIX I

STORY OF U. TIROT SINGH THE KHASI TRIBAL HERO

IN 1826, David Scott was appointed the Senior Commissioner of Assam in addition to his earlier roles. It was during this period that U. Tirot Singh came into prominence. Tirot Singh's life and his activities are described by Hamlet Bareh (1984) in great details. Tirot became the Raja of Nong-khlaw not as a direct heir but as the distantly connected nephew of Chuttra Singh (Bareh, 1984 : 21). Normally the "eight Myntries" of the state select a *syiem* or Raja in Khasi society, and such selection is made open in the full state *durbar*. Bareh (1984 : 22) writes "Tirot Singh's accession coincided with the East India Company's advent and perhaps this coincidence made matters more complicated". Tirot Singh's succession coincided with the first English man's visit into this Khasi State. Tirot Singh held a full State Durbar in November 1826 whereby, in the presence of Mr. Scott, it was agreed "to aid in the construction of the road which was to pass through their territory" (Bareh 1984:25). Tirot Singh provided the British with working men, materials and other articles for road construction. However, it appears that in the written treaty there was no mention that the British will be provided with the material and manual help.

The coming of the British Administration in Assam, after it had replaced the Burmese and

the consequent seizure of the Khasi *dwars* in the plains, brought about more and more unhappy relations. The possession of the *dwars* became a bone of contention amongst them. For instance. U. Bor Manik of Shillong resented that the British Government had not returned the plains of Dimurua (inhabited by Mikirs, Lalungs and Assamese) and which had been part of this kingdom since time immemorial. Bor Manik called upon the other Khasi kings to provide him assistance in the event of a war with the Government. This situation provided the bonds of friendship between Tirot Singh and Bor Manik to become more stronger. Tirot Singh also resented that Bar *dwar* had not been restored to Nongkhlaw inspite of Mr. Scott's offer and commitment during their first interview (Bareh, 1984 : 39-40). The other kingdoms had watched this incident with great concern. Thus all the northern and southern *syiems*, who had been deprived of their markets, agreed to support U. Tirot Singh against the British. The friendship between Nongkhlaw and Shillong grew stronger and had helped to strengthen the Khasi confederacy organized by Tirot Singh and Bor Manik to resist the government pressure during the wars that were fought from 1829 to 1833.

By the last week of April 1829, the Britishers followed up their success rapidly. Mr. Scott had advanced to Shillong, whereas Lister had already approached Nongkhlaw. Everywhere the soliders set the villages to fire, the Khasis put a stout defence at the cost of great sacrifices, death and loss of property. An intensive economic blockade was also imposed. With the fall of Nongkhlaw, Tirot Singh was declared an outlaw and a reward of Rs. 1,000 was announced for his apprehension. The Government approved Mr. Scott's plan to award suitably the Government's allies. An amnesty was declared also to those who preferred to submit. Mr. Scott had announced that the Government would continue to observe the treaty of 1826

which should provide an asset for guidance of future relations. This, however, could not be accepted by the Khasis since in their heart of hearts they were seeking to get back their independence. Tirot had now desired that the road was either to be abandoned or diverted to other places (Bareh, 1984 : 55).

The British Government, inspite of U. Tirot Singh's persistence, could not help respecting him as a great patriot dedicated to the cause of his land. Therefore, in dealing with Kingdoms which entered protection, David Scott took steps that their status as "Khasi States" was retained.

In course of time Tirot Singh's position became weakened since treaties were imposed upon his allies. Further, a rigid economic blockade imposed by Government hit hard the people, cultivation and other works being adversely affected on account of these wars which had dragged several villagers to loose possessions containing jewels, gold and silver ornaments. Tirot Singh now felt that a guerrilla warfare would have been more effectual in resisting his enemy. Thus he left Nongkhlaw and retired to a cave from where he conducted future operations. Visitors, envoys, warriors and commanders flocked to him by devious paths.

History is silent on the immediate development until Tirot Singh's final capture which came to occur in January 1833. Tirot Singh was made prisoner of war and taken to Gauhati where he faced his trial bravely (Bareh, 1984 : 115). He was sentenced to life imprisonment at Dacca and was later on treated as a political prisoner. Tirot Singh did not live long at Dacca. One tradition says that he lived for one year more after his capture, and passed away during his early thirties (Bareh, 1984 : 117).

APPENDIX II

ETHNIC GROUPS OF NORTH-EAST INDIA

Assam

1. Barman/Kachari.
2. Bodo/Bodo-Kachari.
3. Deori.
4. Dimasa (Kachari).
5. Kachari, including Sonwal Kachari.
6. Lalung.
7. Mech-Kachari (Cachari).
8. Karbi.
9. Miri.
10. Rabha.
11. Semsa.
12. Mishing/Miri.
13. Riang.
14. Tripuri.
15. Chakma.
16. Garo.
17. Koch.
18. Santal (and other Tea Garden Tribes).
19. Tai/Pakhyal.
20. Hmar.
21. Ahom.
22. Kabui.
23. Manipuri.
24. Kuki.
25. Sema
26. Thadou.

Arunachal Pradesh

1. Adi.
2. Gallong.
3. Padam.
4. Minyong.
5. Pasi.
6. Pailibo.
7. Millang.
8. Aka/Krusso.
9. Apatani.
10. Ashing.
11. Bagi.
12. Bangni.
13. Tagin Bangni.
14. Yanoo Bangni.
15. Bengro.
16. Bokar.
17. Hishi/Nishang/Sulung.
18. Digaru/Taraon Mishmi.
19. Hill Miri.
20. Idu/Chulikata Mishmi.
21. Kaman/Miju Mishmi.
22. Karka.
23. Khamba.
24. Khamti.
25. Miji.
26. Memba.
27. Monpa.
28. Dirang Monpa.
29. Lish Monpa.
30. Nocte.
31. Sherdukpen.
32. Simong.
33. Singpho.
34. Sulung.
35. Tagin.
36. Tanggam.
37. Tangsa.
38. Moglum Tangsa.
39. Mosaang Tangsa.

40. Tikhak Tangsa.
41. Wanchoo.
42. Bugung/Khowa
43. Deori.
44. Khongbo.
45. Mishing/Miri.
46. Meyor.
47. Zaharing.
48. Na.
49. Yobin/Lisu.

(In all cases ethnic boundaries are not absolute and fission and fusion might have changed the situations.)

Meghalaya

1. Garo
2. Hajong.
3. Lyngam.
4. Khasi.
5. Jaintia.
6. Lalung.
7. Rabha.
8. Koch.
9. Kachari.
10. Karbi.
11. Biate.

(Including Khynriam, War, Bhoi).

Manipur

1. Anal.
2. Chiru.
3. Chote.
4. Gangte.
5. Hmar.
6. Kabui.
7. Kacha Naga (Rongmei, Liangmei and Puimei).
8. Kom.

9. Lamgang.
10. Mao.
11. Maram.
12. Maring.
13. Mongsang.
14. Paite.
15. Simte.
16. Tangkhul.
17. Meitei-Manipuri.
18. Bishnupriya.
19. Kuki (including several ex-clan segments which have become tribes).
20. Thadou.
21. Vaiphei.
22. Zemi.
23. Zou.
24. Zomi.

Mizoram

1. Lakher.
2. Pawi.
3. Lushai.
4. Mizo (this category includes in its fold Lushai and many other tribes).
5. Paite.
6. Poi.
7. Hmar.
8. Riang.
9. Chakma.

Nagaland

1. Angami.
2. Ao.
3. Sema.
4. Lotha.
5. Phom.
6. Sangtam.
7. Yimchunger (including Makware, Tikhiri, Chir).

8. Chang.
9. Khiamngan.
10. Pochury.
11. Chakhesang.
12. Konyak.
13. Zeliang (including Zemi, Liangmei & Rongmei).
14. Kabui.
15. Kuki.
16. Garo.
17. Mikir.

Tripura

1. Tripuri.
2. Riang.
3. Chakma.

The above list of ethnic groups is based on material distributed by the NEC during the seminar on 'Status of Tribal Research in N.-E. India', on 25th July, 1984. Help of census works, gazetteers, monographs and state level handbooks published by economic and statistical departments and Tribal Research Institutes of different states are also taken. The list enumerates mainly the tribes and the sub-tribes. They do not necessarily belong to Scheduled Tribe categories.

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